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&c.

A LETTER

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD ——,

IN REPLY TO CERTAIN INQUIRIES.

BY

THE REV. JOHN FLETCHER, D. D.

Si judicas, cognosce.—SENECA.

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LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD ——— *

My Lord,

It would have been more gratifying to me, and perhaps, eventually, more satisfactory to yourself, if you had proposed your alleged difficulties, and the questions stated in your letter, to some other member of our communion, who is more competent to reply to them than I am. There are, among my fellow clergymen, many, who, by their learning and superior talents, are better qualified than myself to perform the interesting task. However, since you have been pleased to assign it to me, and thus honour me with the flattering expression of your confidence, I shall, hence, endeavour to acquit myself of it, as well as my slender abilities, and the declining state of my health, will permit me.

You are now engaged, you tell me, in the study of religion, anxious to find out the truth, and endeavouring to discover, which, among the variety of Christian sects, is really the true Church of Christ. All this, my Lord, is wise. You are thus acting, both as the prudent Christian, and the consistent Protestant. For, whilst it is the bounden *duty* of every Christian to believe the truth, and to be a member of the true Church, it is, at the same time, according to *your* fundamental principles, the strict *obligation* of every Protestant to found his belief upon the convictions, which result from the process of serious investigation.

* It was my wish to have published his Lordship's Letter at full length. However, I am not at liberty to do this. I am permitted only to state some of his sentiments and opinions; and to make public my reply to his objections and inquiries.

Accordingly, conducted by these maxims, you have already, you add, examined the doctrines, and reviewed the grounds of your own Protestant Churches. And with these, you have the candour to say, you are by no means satisfied. The contradictions, and errors, which you have traced in their various Creeds; the recentness of their introduction; the methods of their establishment, &c., have excited in your mind perplexities and doubts, to which, before such researches, you had always been a stranger. So that now, the case is—you are a discontented Protestant.

In like manner, you have examined, you add, the doctrines, and the character, of our Church. And here again, you have the frankness to own, that, notwithstanding your deep-rooted prejudices against every thing Catholic, you have, to your surprise, met with many things, which you cannot but reverence, and admire. The uniformity, every where, of its worship, and belief; its venerable antiquity; its widely spread diffusion, &c., have forcibly struck both your imagination and your reason. And neither is this all;—for, you have, still farther, the liberality to say, that you admit the truth of *some* of its doctrines; and the wisdom, and utility, of many of its observances. However, having allowed all this—here you pause. There are, you remark, certain doctrines of ours, which you cannot bring yourself to believe; and from which even, your feelings forcibly recoil. These are our doctrines relating to the Eucharist; but, particularly our doctrine of Transubstantiation. This, my Lord, is an awful state of mind. For thus, unsettled in your faith, and halting between two religions—a dissatisfied Protestant, and an unconvinced Catholic—you are, properly speaking, neither one thing nor another—neither a real Protestant, nor a Catholic.

That your Lordship, educated as you have been, and as nearly all Protestants are educated, in this country, should have entertained very strong prejudices against our religion, is a circumstance which does not surprise me. Every thing almost in your Protestant education, and in the habits and intercourse of Protestant life, is calculated to create and nourish them. The ungenerous feeling is planted, not uncommonly, in the breast of the very infant on the lap of its parent, or its nurse, and it is rooted there, still deeper, on the benches of your

schools; whilst the works of your writers, and the sermons of your preachers, all powerfully concur to strengthen the injurious sentiment. It is, indeed, a fact, that to misrepresent, vilify, and calumniate, our religion, is, among your writers, a very profitable *traffic*; among your preachers, a very holy *duty*. So indecent is the manner in which both these classes assail it, that Dr. Parr, long since, declared it to be downright "*inhuman*." (AT PRESENT, *it is absolutely brutal and atrocious*.) Meanwhile, the great misfortune, in our regard, is, that, deceived, and imposed, upon by these illiberal doings, the public never deem it so much as an act of justice, either to examine the real character of our religion, or the falsehood of the accusations which are urged against it. They hear, and read, every thing to its disadvantage; but not a word, nor a line, in its favour or defence,—very piously devouring every absurdity and lie; and just as piously disregarding every refutation,—swallowing the poison, and rejecting the corrective. Under these circumstances, how is it possible, that they should be otherwise than grossly ignorant, and bigotedly prejudiced? It is, indeed, owing to these, and such like causes, that this country is now—and Gibbon has made the same observation—the most illiberal, and the most bigoted, country in Europe.

However, the above reproaches do not, now at least, any longer apply to your Lordship. Excited by the feelings of candour, and good sense—or rather, I will hope, by the feelings, and calls, of *Grace—you*, as a rare example, have honestly undertaken the Christian task of endeavouring to find out the truth,—scared only, and perplexed, by the difficulties which you have stated to me in your letter. Your perplexities, my Lord, are not much to be wondered at,—seeing that you have but lately begun your researches; and that men do not, in general, at once get rid of their errors, or their long preconceived opinions. But, having said this, I will proceed to the more immediate subjects of your inquiries.

I. Before your Lordship states to me the precise nature of your *objections* to our doctrines respecting the mystery of the Eucharist, you, in the first place, are pleased to usher them in,—perhaps, as a kind of apology for your disbelief,—by the following declaration,—"that you feel, and have always felt, a secret

repugnance to the belief in mysteries." Such is your preliminary observation. Now, my Lord, permit me to remark, that such a declaration as this, coming *from you*,—a Christian, and a member of the Established Church,—is rather a singular confession. For, the truth is, that, in your character, both of a Christian, and a churchman, you not only admit the utility, and own the revelation, of these sacred objects, but you, moreover, profess to believe in a variety of them, which are just as deep, and impenetrable, as are any of those, which *we* believe, in the Catholic Church. Mysteries are, in fact, the very essence of Christianity. And the very essence of all mysteries is their incomprehensibility. This is the definition, which is given of them by St. Paul, who calls them "*the substance of things* NOT SEEN." They are an order of things, placed out of the sphere of created objects,—divine truths, impervious to the senses, and impenetrable to the human understanding; and proposed to us for the exercise of our faith, and the tribute of our obedience. Take away from Christianity its mysteries, and you reduce it to little else than a mere code of Ethics.

You feel a repugnance, you say, to the belief in mysteries. But, is not this repugnance the effect of your not having sufficiently considered their manifold uses and advantages? In the eyes of the pious Christian, there is nothing, that appears so strikingly as they do, to proclaim, and confirm, the grandeur, the wisdom, and the divinity, of the Christian dispensation.

They proclaim its grandeur. Exalting us high above the order of every thing here below, they lay open to our view the divine objects, and the glorious prospects, of another world. They present to us a Saviour, the source of all our hopes; a God, infinite in every perfection; a Trinity of divine persons; a heaven, the seat of eternal happiness, &c.

They attest its wisdom. Emanating from the mind of the Almighty, they are adapted to the promotion of *His* glory, and to the restraint of *our* passions. They promote His glory, by obliging us to pay to Him the homage of our worship, and the tribute of our faith. They restrain our passions, by humbling our pride, mortifying our self-love, and checking our curiosity. They are, thus, directly suited to the nature of our situation here. For, where, or what, would be the value, either of our

obedience or our belief, if, without any clouds, or shades, we beheld, openly exposed to our view, those divine objects, which the wisdom of God has proposed to us for our adoration? In such case, our obedience and belief would cease almost to be virtues.

They confirm its Divinity. It is God alone, that could have taught, and established, an order, or code, of doctrines, so incomprehensible to human reason, so impenetrable to the senses, and so revolting to the passions; uniting to them, at the same time a system of morals so plain and simple, but yet, combined with sentiments the most sublime, and ideas the most exalted. It is God alone, that could have put into the minds, and mouths, of a set of ignorant, uneducated, and vulgar men, a series of truths, far surpassing the reach of all human wisdom, or the dictates of the brightest talents. It is He alone, that could have inspired such truths; and it is His power alone, that could have triumphantly established them.

For these reasons, therefore, I cannot but look upon your Lordship's repugnance to the belief in mysteries, as a feeling, not less inconsistent, than it is unfortunate. I even think, that nothing, as I have just said, can better proclaim the grandeur, the wisdom, and the divinity, of religion, than its very obscurities,—the clouds, which hang round its sanctuary, and the darkness, which veils its divine objects from our sight.

It is, too, for these same reasons also, that you should be induced to feel how very wrong it is; and how improper, in any Christian, to undertake, or to presume, to judge of the alleged, or pretended, falsehood of any mysterious doctrine, either by its imputed opposition to the nature of created things, by the testimony of the senses, or by the contracted measure of the human understanding. All this is taking reason beyond its sphere, and placing divine objects within the narrow circle of earthly ones. It is making ourselves the judges of God's wisdom and omnipotence, and erecting our feeble notions into the standard of His conduct. As if He, in the infinitude of his power, had not the means of doing more than our slender capacities can comprehend! As if He, who, *by a word*, called the whole order of nature into existence, and formed its laws, had

not equally,—if he so will it,—the means, and facility, of suspending, varying, or changing their operations and effects.

In order to reconcile our minds to the belief of the mysterious doctrines of religion, and to dispose them the better to the obedience of faith, it has pleased the wisdom of God to spread a veil of darkness even over the order of *Nature itself;* and over those very objects, too, which are the most nearly proportioned to the measure of the human understanding. Nature is full of mysteries. It is the seat of abysses, which no mortal eye can explore; the scene of wonders, which no earthly science can explain. To engage us, indeed, to adore his wisdom, and admire his greatness, God has kindly unfolded to our view the excellences, the beauties, and the splendours, of one great portion of the spectacle of the universe. But, on the other hand, he has, at the same time,—in order to humble our pride, and confound our curiosity,—shed clouds of impenetrable darkness over all the rest. Thus, how little, for example, do we understand of that secret power, by which nature is, each instant, producing, and reproducing, itself under such an infinite variety of forms and appearances? how little of that process, by which the union of a little earth and water gives life and beauty to all the plants, and fruits, and flowers, that enrich and adorn creation? how little of that instrument, or hand, which moves and regulates those glorious orbs, which revolve above us? And not only is this the case,—but not even can any human ingenuity explain the essence, or construction, of the most trifling objects,—of a blade of grass, or a grain of sand. The plainest sciences have their mysteries, which neither a Newton, a Locke, nor a Descartes, have been able to penetrate. We are, ourselves, mysteries to ourselves. For, we neither understand how the soul is united to the body, nor do we comprehend the nature of its modifications, faculties, or operations. It is so, too, in regard of the divinity Himself. For, although every thing around us presents the plainest evidences of his power and wisdom, yet are the nature, as well as the measure, of his divine attributes incomprehensible to our limited capacities. In short, the truth is, that nearly all we know of the objects that surround us, is the fact of their existence;

nearly all we see, is their superficies. Their substance, essence, modes of existence, &c., are secrets, which no earthly science can explain, nor any earthly wisdom penetrate.

Wherefore, my Lord, seeing that nature itself is so full of mysteries, ought it not, hence, to appear to you but reasonable to admit, that religion also,—and still more,—should have her's? And if, without hesitation, you believe the former, why so much repugnance to believe the latter? or rather, why not, with equal willingness, believe them? In the order of nature, those truths, which, beyond all others, are the most exalted and sublime, are also, beyond all others, the most inexplicable and profound. Therefore,—judging by the rules of analogy,—it is but consistent, in like manner, to suppose that, in the order of religion, those doctrines which are the most incomprehensible, are likewise, beyond others, the grandest and the most important. "*Mysteries,*" says Fenelon, "*give no uneasiness to a pious and enlightened man. Remarking that, in nature itself, every thing is incomprehensible to human reason, he is not, therefore, surprised, that he cannot understand the secrets of the Divinity. His very weakness thus becomes strength; and his darkness, light. Diffident in himself, he is all obedience to the voice of God.*" Thus, then, it is, my Lord, that neither the greatness of our mysteries, nor their number, ought to form any real subject of annoyance to your feelings. Their greatness is rather the seal of their divinity; their number, the attestation of God's mercy and benevolence.

You may, perhaps, ask me, "What, then, such being the case, is the use of our reason, in relation to the mysteries of religion? For, has not our reason, you say, been conferred upon us, in order to be the guide of our spiritual concerns, as it is our director in the temporal interests of the world? And has not St. Paul reminded us to take care that our faith and obedience "*be reasonable?*" To these questions the reply is sufficiently contained in the principles which I have just laid down. The use of reason cannot, of course, be to judge of objects, which are not within the sphere of reason; not to fathom abysses which cannot be fathomed; nor daringly to attempt to draw aside the veil, which the hand of the Almighty has hung before the portal of his sanctuary. This, my Lord,—

although it is, indeed, the constant practice of YOUR *writers, in regard to the mysteries of* OUR *religion,*—is not the right use of reason. The only right and consistent use of reason, with respect to these sacred objects, is simply this,—to ascertain by the attestations, and aid of *testimony*, THE FACT, whether they have been really revealed or not; whether there are just grounds for believing that God has indeed spoken, and delivered them to us. The use of our reason is, to conduct us to the threshold of the sanctuary, where He utters his divine oracles, there to listen to his word; and having once heard this,—humbly to *adore*. Such is the sole use of our reason, in relation to the mysteries of religion. "*Faith*," says one of the best of your Bampton Lecturers, "*should repose on* TESTIMONY. *The mysterious doctrines of religion should be considered, rather as matters of* FACT, *than of science.* THE FACT, *once proved—our duty is belief, and acquiescence.*"

I have just asserted, how much these principles are violated by *your* writers, whenever there is question of the mysterious doctrines of *our* religion. Yourself, my Lord, cannot but frequently have remarked, that these men,—many of the most learned and ardent defenders of your Church,—in all their disputes and controversies with the unbeliever, and the latitudinarian,—with the Deists, the Socinians, Unitarians, and so on,—very forcibly condemn the practice; and reprobate the notion of treating the doctrines of religion, as "*a science;*" of comparing divine things with human ones; or of judging of any mystery by the mystery itself. Reasoning with the aforesaid enemies of revelation, your divines then reason, as we Catholics do, contending, that the only consistent and Christian method of ascertaining the truth, or of judging of the nature of any mystery, is simply the authority of *testimony*, or the evidence of the FACT, that it has certainly been revealed. In short, on all these occasions, they reason as the Christian should do. But, see now, and mark,—as, no doubt, you have done,—the conduct, and the language, of these same individuals, whenever there is question of *our* religion; that is, whenever they combat, or pretend to refute, *our* mysterious doctrines. On all these occasions you have uniformly found that, abandoning, or forgetting, all their Christian principles, they fiercely assail *our*

doctrines with the very arms, and arguments, of the Socinian and the unbeliever. They do not, now, contest the *testimony*, or the *fact*, of their revelation; but, like so many profane philosophists,—or just as the Deists do, in regard of all the Christian mysteries, — they treat them as the objects of "*science*," and declare them at once, "*absurd, contradictory, and impossible;*" adding, moreover, to the profaneness of their declarations every indecent form of ridicule and insult, that their illiberality can suggest. Such, we see it every day, is the almost universal method in which *your* writers, and divines, treat the mysteries of *our* religion; reasoning always, in all their contests *against us*, like so many Socinians, Deists, or unbelievers. This is an observation, which has frequently been made by the disciples of the modern schools of infidelity. And it is owing, in part, to this circumstance; but, still more, to the leading principles of the Reformation, that these men, delighted with the dreadful thought, have confidently predicted, that Protestantism will, and, ere long, must, terminate in complete Socinianism. "*Ses ramifications*," says Diderot, "*se develloppant; et s'éténdant continuellement, ne peuvent pas manquer de faire, bientôt, du Protestantisme en général un Socinianisme parfait, qui absorbera, peu-à-peu, tous les différens systêmes de ces errans.*" This prediction—already frightfully verified in most Protestant states—is unhappily, in this country, too, very rapidly hastening, it is greatly to be feared, to its fulfilment; and, above all, amongst the higher orders of its society. Thus, speaking of your clergy, Gibbon says of them, "*They preserve the name of religion, without the substance; and subscribe the articles of their belief, with a* SIGH, OR A SMILE." Speaking of your gentry, Mr. Wilberforce says, "*The time is fast approaching, when infidelity will be held the necessary appendage of a man of fashion; and to believe will be the indication of a feeble and contracted mind.*

Having premised these reflections,—which your Lordship will do well to carry with you, as so many monitors, and guides, in your subsequent studies concerning the mysteries of religion, and which also shew the unreasonableness of your repugnance to believe them:—having done this, I will now enter upon the direct reply to your objections.

II. The chief source, you tell me, of your doubts and perplexities, respecting our religion, are our doctrines concerning the mystery of the Eucharist. At this, since you feel so strong a repugnance to the belief of mysteries, and have not, as yet, studied sufficiently the awful subject, I am not, as I have said already, surprised. The Eucharist is, no doubt, a stupendous mystery; the most stupendous, perhaps, after that of the Incarnation, of all the wonderful institutions of our Redeemer. Incomprehensible to human reason, and confounding to the researches of curiosity and pride, it is the exact fulfilment of that definition of St. Paul respecting the mysteries of faith:—"*The substance of things* NOT SEEN." For these reasons, to those who have not studied the evidences of the FACT of its establishment, as well as to the profane and the incredulous, it is to all such a stumbling-block and a scandal: it is, just like its divine author, "*a sign, set up to be contradicted.*"

Foreseeing these difficulties, our Saviour, in order to reconcile the minds of men to the belief, and veneration, of the mystery, has, in his wisdom and tenderness, been pleased to attach to the certainty of its institution, a series of evidences and circumstances, more striking and affecting, than any thing which he has appended to the establishment of any other sacrament of the Christian code. Thus, in regard of the *promise* of the blessed gift, your Lordship will remark, that *this*, besides being made repeatedly, and made also in the most positive terms, is, moreover, ushered in, by way of proving the possibility of its fulfilment—by a wonderful exhibition of the omnipotence of its founder, in the performance, and display, of miracles. Thus, in its *institution*, you will equally observe, that *this*, too, like the promise, is expressed and described in language the most clear and simple; and accompanied, at the same time, by a scene peculiarly moving and expressive. Thus, again, you will be struck with the circumstance, that, whereas many of the great and extraordinary actions of our Saviour are related, some of them, by only *two*; some of them by but *one*, of the Evangelists,—the institution of the Eucharist is related by all the *four*,—a fact, which cannot but appear to you singular, if not providential. But, neither is this all: for, St.

Paul, who, in the whole series of his many epistles, does not record one other single action of Christ, records his institution of the Eucharist. This, too, is another fact, which, not less than the preceding, must seem to merit your serious consideration.

There is, also, another observation, which, in your study of the sacred pages, will not fail to strike your good sense:—That, in all the descriptions, which the inspired writers have given us of the holy institution, their language, and their accounts, are every where exactly similar and alike; alike plain, clear, and natural,—without metaphor, or figure, comment, or explanation; without any variation of expression, or any differences of circumstance. St. Paul, too, informs us, that the account which he has furnished of the divine mystery, "*he had learnt from the Lord himself.*" From this uniformity of narrative, as well as from this plainness of language, your Lordship's candour will, I am convinced, deduce inferences favourable to our Catholic doctrines.

Before I cite, and discuss, the passages to which I have been alluding, I will state to you the rule, by which it is my design, and shall be my constant endeavour, to explain them. The rule, then, which I shall adopt for this purpose, shall be your own Protestant rule, or canon, of biblical criticism, prescribed for the safe and prudent understanding of the sacred volume. By this rule, it is required, that, whenever the language of the Holy Book is plain, it shall then accordingly be explained in the plain and obvious acceptation of the words. Such is the rule which I propose to follow. It is the very rule, laid down by your Established Church, and imposed strictly upon our clergy, for the interpretation, and right understanding, of the Thirty-nine Articles. In the declaration, prefixed to these articles, it is ordained, that "*they shall take each article, in its literal and grammatical sense.*" This, therefore, is a rule, to which neither your Lordship, nor any other Protestant, can, with consistency, object. Its observance, too, is here, in relation to the mystery of the Eucharist, the more prudent and necessary, as it cannot be reasonably supposed that our Saviour, instituting the most important of his sacraments, would, on such an occasion, have expressed himself in a manner which it was difficult to understand.

III. The first attestation, to which I have alluded in favour of the mystery, is the *promise* of its institution, made solemnly by our Saviour, and related in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St. John.

In your study of the Scriptures, you may, perhaps, have remarked, that it was the occasional practice of Christ, before he executed some of his great designs, to prepare the minds of his disciples for their completion. He did so, for example, in relation to the sacrament of Baptism, forewarning them of its future introduction, and of the necessity of its application. He did so, in regard to some of the mysteries of his Passion, foretelling them that he should be delivered to the Gentiles, and be nailed to a cross; that he should die, rise up again to life, ascend into heaven, and thence send down the Holy Ghost upon his followers. Such as this was the order of his wisdom in regard of these, because they were wonderful dispensations of his power and mercy. Accordingly, since, among all his various dispensations, there is none more wonderful than the sacrament of the Eucharist, so also, by the like act of his wisdom and benevolence, he was pleased, ere he bestowed the hallowed gift, to prepare the minds of his followers for its reverence and belief.

The occasion which he selected for this important purpose, was one particularly suited to the desired effect. It was, when having retired into the desert, accompanied by his apostles and disciples, and followed by a multitude of persons, amounting in number to five thousand, he there performed for their relief and comfort, one of the most surprising of his miracles. He multiplied for them five loaves and two fishes, so as to supply a more than sufficient meal for the whole assembled crowd. This took place on the first day of his arrival upon the scene; when, again, in the evening also, after his return from the solitude of the mountain, he came back to his apostles, walking upon the waves of the sea of Tiberias.

On the succeeding day, attracted by the splendour of the aforesaid miracles, and expecting, perhaps, to witness others similar to them, the people again crowded eagerly round Him, at the village of Capernaum. Wherefore, as he had now convinced them of the greatness of his power, and that "*He was the*

prophet, who should come into the world," seizing upon this opportunity,—than which none could have been more favourable,—he proceeded, after having first inculcated the necessity of believing in Him, to lay open to them his design of bestowing upon them, ere long, his divine sacrament of the Eucharist. Let your Lordship but weigh his words with care, and consider attentively the whole instructive and striking spectacle.

"*I am,*" he says to the listening multitude, "*the living bread, that came down from heaven.*

"*If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread, that I* WILL *give, is my flesh, which I* WILL *give for the life of the world.*

"*The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*

"*Then Jesus said unto them, Amen, Amen, I say unto you, unless you do eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.*

"*For, my flesh is meat indeed; and my blood is drink indeed.*

"*He, that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in Me, and I in him.*

"*As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he, that eateth Me, the same shall also live by Me,*" &c.

Such were the words of our Saviour; and such the declarations,—six times repeated,—which, upon this solemn occasion, he made to the assembled multitude. Now, considering the words themselves, it is clear, that they are such as common sense most easily understands—simple, natural, and plain. No possible form of language could, better than they do, express, both the reality of the Divine Presence in the promised gift, and the excellences of its benefits. As interpreted, according to your canons of interpretation,—"*in their literal, and grammatical, sense,*"—they admit the above, and no other reasonable signification.

Accordingly, referring to the manner in which the whole assembled multitude understood them,—for this is the sure criterion of their meaning,—you find, that it was precisely in their literal, and obvious, sense. For this reason it was, that,

looking upon the promised blessing, as something too wonderful and extraordinary, they were scandalised, and murmured. "*This, they said, is a hard saying; and who can hear it? They strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*" His very disciples, shocked at the singular declaration, "*went away; and walked no more with Him.*" Now, what, under these trying circumstances, was the conduct of the benevolent Being? Did he, then, in consequence of all this, soften down his expressions, or explain them in any other sense than what they literally imply; and in which the multitude and the disciples had understood them — telling them, for example, that they had mistaken his meaning; and that he was speaking to them only figuratively? So far from any thing like this, he, on the contrary, insisted, still more forcibly, on the reality of what he had just been declaring so explicitly. "*Amen, Amen,*" he added,—the very terms, which, beyond all others, express the strongest confirmation:—"*Amen, Amen, I say unto you, unless you do eat the flesh of the Son of Man, you shall not have life in you.*"—And now, turning to his disciples, he said to them, "*Does this offend* YOU?" Then,—mark this well:—then, by way of reproach for their incredulity, and in order to prove to them his power of performing the promised wonder, he appealed to his own omnipotence, referring them to another stupendous wonder, which, soon, they would be called upon to witness. "*What then,*" he asked them, "*if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?*" This surely, my Lord, is a mode of reasoning, which, if it were not designed to prove the possibility, and the future certainty, of the promised gift, and to engage his followers to believe in the sacred institution, is completely unintelligible, and devoid of meaning.

But neither is this all. For, now, the Divine Being,—after having thus witnessed the murmurs and incredulity of the multitude, and the abandonment and desertion of his disciples,—now, turning to his apostles, as he had done to the former, he addressed them, and said, "*And will not* YOU *also go away?*" And what, then, was their reply; and what the conduct of these more enlightened individuals? Why, although like the Jews and the disciples, they had, perhaps, been surprised and startled at the proposal, and idea, of so great a mystery, yet,

unlike those unbelievers,—recollecting the power, the wisdom, and the mercy, of their Divine Master, and looking back to the miracles which they had just seen him perform,—*they*, under these impressions, humbly bending down their reason to his word, submitted, and believed. "*Lord*," they replied, "*to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe. Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.*"

Thus, I have laid before your Lordship the history of one of the most striking scenes of our Saviour's life. Its design, as I have stated, was not to establish, at that time, the sacrament of the Eucharist; but only to prepare the minds of the faithful for its approaching institution. Accordingly, every thing, you must have remarked, in the whole series of his conduct, was adapted to produce this effect,—his miracles, his words, his repeated and strong asseverations. In like manner, every thing in the conduct of his followers,—the scandal and murmurs of the multitude, the abandonment of the disciples, the faith and submission of the apostles,—shew clearly in what sense they, all of them, understood the words and declarations of the Divine Being. They all clearly understood them in their plain and literal sense. Hence, therefore, the incredulity of the multitude; and hence the faith and submission of the apostles: "*Lord, thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe.*" May the like consideration of the power, wisdom, and mercy, of your Saviour produce the like effects in your Lordship, which it did in these docile men, engaging you to call out, as they did, "*Lord, thou hast the words of eternal life; and I believe.*"

I need not here remark, for you cannot but have already remarked it yourself, how exactly, in the foregoing narrative, every thing accords with *our* doctrine respecting the holy mystery; and how very ill with *yours*—that is, with the doctrines of your Protestant churches concerning the said sacred institution. *Our* doctrine respecting it is the direct echo of the *words* of Christ; *our* belief, the direct agreement with the meaning of his words: whilst again, every thing, in our notions, corresponds with the whole tenour of the extraordinary *conduct* of our Saviour, on the occasion of the important promise. But, to reconcile *your* doctrines respecting the mystery, either with the

words, or the *conduct*, of the Divine Being, on the eventful occasion, this is a task, which your writers, with all their ingenuity, have never been able to accomplish. For, either these men reduce the mystery to no mystery at all,—contending, that it is but a figure, and a piously commemorative rite; or else, they distort it into an inexplicable riddle, professing to admit a *real presence*, but reducing this to *a real absence;* contradicting the plain and positive assurances of Christ—"*my flesh is meat indeed; my blood is drink indeed;*" and violating grossly their own acknowledged rules of Scriptural interpretation. In like manner, it is just equally impossible to reconcile *your* doctrines with the *conduct* of Christ, as it is with his *words*. For, if the Eucharist were, in the mind of the Divine Personage, designed to be only a figure, or pious rite, or the oblation of a little blessed bread and wine, what possible need could there, in such cases, have been for all that solemnity, with which he ushered in and announced the promise of so very simple an institution? what need of miracles to dispose the public to believe it, or of so many strong asseverations to confirm it? As again, if the institution were so very simple a thing, what room for the scandal, and murmurs, of the multitudes; for the desertion and incredulity of the disciples; or even for the faith and obedience of the apostles? The truth is, that the whole narrative of the Evangelist, relating to the mystery, is completely incoherent, as it is explained, or understood, by the Protestant; and plain, obvious, and consistent, as it is interpreted by the Catholic.

Having thus laid before your Lordship the history of the *promise* of the holy dispensation, designed to dispose the minds of men to reverence and adore it, I will now proceed to consider the account of its subsequent *fulfilment* by the establishment itself of the sacred gift. And here you will trace the most perfect accordance between the two narratives, insomuch, that, if there were any thing obscure in the *promise*, the obscurity would be done away by the clearness of its *fulfilment*.

IV. The account of the fulfilment of our Saviour's promise, or of the *establishment* itself of the divine mystery, is contained in the Gospels of three of the Evangelists, as well as in one of the Epistles of St. Paul;—in the 26th chapter

of St. Matthew, in the 14th chapter of St. Mark, in the 22nd of St. Luke, and in the 11th of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The relation of the great event is expressed in each of these instructive documents, in nearly the very same words. For this reason I need only to cite the narrative which is given by any one of the sacred penmen. The following is that of St. Luke xxii. 19, 20 :—

"*And Jesus took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it to them, saying,* THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH IS GIVEN FOR YOU. *Do this in remembrance of Me.*"

Likewise also the cup, after supper, saying, "*This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which* SHALL BE SHED FOR YOU."

Such, as recorded by all the above-mentioned writers, was the spectacle of the Last Supper. It was an occasion, which, next to the tragedy upon Calvary, was, of all others, during the course of the Saviour's career on earth, the most awful and important: whence also, that solemn preparation for it, which I have been describing from the Gospel of St. John. The Divine Being was then establishing the most sacred of all his holy dispensations; introducing a new rite, intended for the sanctification of mankind till the end of time; and designed also to be the strong and public tie of his religion. He was forming a new alliance with his followers; signing his last will and testament; and bequeathing to his creatures the last best pledge of his affection for them. Hence it was, that, kindly addressing his apostles, he said to them, "*With a strong desire have I longed to eat this passover with you before I die.*"

Now, my Lord, considering these circumstances, and combining them with your convictions of the wisdom, the mercy, and the omnipotence of Christ, you cannot but allow that, if upon any occasion he would speak plainly, or that he would really mean what he positively averred, it must have been upon an occasion like the above. To suppose the contrary, appears to me an impeachment of his wisdom. He had indeed often, during the course of his ministry, spoken to his apostles in the language of parables. But, as if alluding to the great mystery, he had told them likewise, "*The time cometh when I shall no more speak to you in parables.*" Now, if so, then never was

there any occasion, when the fulfilment of this assurance was either so necessary, or so natural;—giving, as he then was, his last instructions to his disciples, and instituting the greatest of all his sacraments.

Accordingly, my Lord, bearing in your mind these useful impressions, weigh now, and consider seriously, both the *words* and the *conduct* of Jesus, whilst seated at the farewell feast. In the former, there is nothing but what is plain and simple; in the latter, nothing but what is expressive of tenderness and love: "*Loving his own, he loved them to the end.*" Taking, says the Evangelist, into his hands the element of bread, and having solemnly blessed and broken it, he then presented it to his apostles, with the positive declaration, "THIS *is My body;*" adding, moreover, in order to prevent or remove any doubt, or fear, upon the subject, the express assurance that it was the very body which was "*given*" for them: "*This is My body, which is* GIVEN *for you.*" His language is not less clear, and forcible, when He presents to them the chalice: for, not only does he then assure them that it was his *blood*, but the blood also that should be "SHED" for their salvation. Now, taking all the above words, or sentences, in their natural and obvious meaning, or explaining them by *your own* rules of interpretation, they do certainly imply that, what Christ then gave to his apostles, was his own real body and blood. They imply and express this as clearly as any possible form of words can do it. Or else, if such is not their meaning, I can then only say, that never were terms more unintelligible and obscure, expressing precisely what they do *not* mean. The Divine Being could not, if such be the case, have expressed himself *worse*.

By way of bringing the question, perhaps somewhat closer to your reason, I will, for a moment, appeal to your *feelings*. Make then with me the following supposition:—suppose, and imagine yourself present with your Saviour in the cœnaculum, where the great mystery is preparing and accomplished; and seated beside Him at the holy table. You behold Him there,—his whole soul absorpt in the sacred work,—*with a strong desire*, as He said, *longing to eat* the hallowed passover. You see Him lift up his eyes to heaven; with humble reverence, address his Eternal Father; bless, with awful solemnity, the elements,

which he held in hand ; and then,—these expressive acts completed,—you see him present the now consecrated gifts to his apostles, assuring them, in the clearest and most positive terms, that they were his body and his blood; *the body*, that was "GIVEN,"—the blood, that was "SHED," for their salvation. Here, then, I appeal to your feelings. Supposing yourself present on this awful occasion, would you, after witnessing the above scene, and hearing the aforesaid assurances,—would you, or rather, *could* you, have refused to believe Him? or could you have conceived that he did not then mean what he so positively asserted; and that what he called his "*body*," and his "*blood*," were not, after all, his body and blood, but merely a little blessed, and unchanged, bread and wine; or a pious figure? Making the supposition, that the Divine Being had presented, with his own hands, the hallowed gifts to *you*, with the express declaration, that they were his own flesh and blood, I am convinced, that *you*, so far from even doubting the exact truth of his word, would, just like the apostles at Capernaum, humbly adoring his omnipotence and mercy, have exclaimed, "*Lord, thou hast the words of eternal life, and I believe.*"

Considering, indeed, the history of the sacred institution, with all the striking circumstances appended to it, there is nothing related in the series of the Scriptures that should seem more manifest, than that the words and declarations of its Divine Author should be taken and understood, in their obvious, and literal, sense. Every other interpretation of them is forced, distorted, and incoherent; a direct violation, as I have already said, of your own rules of biblical criticism, and an infringement of that universally received maxim, that all last wills and testaments ought always to be explained, according to the clear, and obvious, meaning of the words of the testator.

Considering, in like manner, the sanctity and infinite importance of the mystery; considering the high trust, which Christ committed to his apostles;—considering these things, it cannot but appear evident that, if there had been any thing obscure, or doubtful, in the assurances and conduct of the Divine Being;—any thing which the apostles did not, or might not understand, he, surely, in such a case would, and indeed *ought*, to have explained it to them. For they, in the course of

a few days were to become the interpreters of his words, and the ministers of the Holy Sacrament. He knew, moreover, that in every revolving age, and in every region of the globe, the Christian world would understand his words in their plain, and literal, signification. If, therefore, this were not their true and genuine import, ought he not, as he had frequently done on other, and on far less important, occasions, to have explained their real and proper meaning? or at all events, ought he not to have expressed himself in a different way from what he has done? His mercy, I conceive, as well as his justice, renders this incontestable.

The same kind of observation applies almost equally to the conduct of the sacred writers, as it does to that of our Saviour. For, if the words of this Divine Being are not to be taken in their obvious meaning, or if those holy penmen understood them in any other, would not *they*, or rather, *ought* not they too, both in charity and in justice, to have revealed the important secret? Or, at least, ought not they to have presented some clue, or thrown out some hint or other, by means of which the happy discovery might be made? Whereas, what is the fact? The account, as your Lordship has remarked, which they give of the sacred institution, besides being related by each of them in precisely the same manner, is, at the same time, described in terms plain, clear, and intelligible, as any thing that the simplicity of language could have suggested or supplied,—an artless narrative, without either comment, hint, or observation. Surely then, if the words of Christ ought not to be taken in their plain and obvious sense, or if the apostles did not understand them thus, how strange, how passing strange, it is that they should all have expressed themselves, as they have done, in language which conveys no other idea but that of a real and substantial presence? not even adding so much as the slightest insinuation to the contrary. The plainness, therefore, of their narratives, on the one hand, and their silence on the other, are, I think, to the open and unprejudiced mind, a sufficient evidence, that the words of our Saviour in the divine institution ought certainly to be understood in their plain, and only natural, signification.

I have stated that, besides the Evangelists, St. Paul likewise has recorded, and described, the establishment of the holy

mystery,—a circumstance, I have also remarked, which ought to appear to you, as it certainly is, both striking and providential: because it is the *only* action of our Saviour that, in the series of his various Epistles, he has recorded. And then, too, he records and relates *this*, informing us at the same time, that "*he had learned it from the Lord himself.*" And neither is this the sole attestation of the apostle in favour of the mystery. For, in the course of his many instructions, addressed to the faithful, he delivers to them several lessons relating to it, which tend, all of them, not only to confirm the truth of our doctrine concerning the Holy Sacrament, but even of themselves to *prove it.*

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, describing the establishment of the mystery, he tells them, "*I have received of the Lord that, which also I delivered unto you; that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread;*

"*And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, Take, eat, This is My body, which is* BROKEN *for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.*

"*In the same manner also, He took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament* IN MY BLOOD," &c., xi. 23. &c. Such is the account which the Apostle, instructed by Christ Jesus himself, has given of the Sacrament. It is precisely the same as that recorded by the three Evangelists,—clear, simple, and devoid of any figure. Explained, or understood, in the ordinary and obvious acceptation of the words, it admits no other meaning but that, which I have been attributing to the language of those sacred writers.

Accordingly, I now invite your Lordship to remark carefully, (for they are full of meaning,) the inferences and lessons which St. Paul, after having thus described the establishment of the mystery, inculcates, and deduces from it. All these, as I have said, are of themselves sufficient both to confirm and to *prove* the truth of our doctrine relating to it.

"*Wherefore,*" says the Apostle, "*whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the* BODY AND BLOOD *of the Lord.*" Such is the first inference which he deduces from the character of the mystery, declaring, that whosoever receives the sacred food "*unworthily,*" is guilty of a crime of the blackest dye, even of the

profanation of the person himself of Jesus Christ. This frightful inference is at once intelligible, as the mystery is explained by *our* doctrine,—admitting, as we do, the true and real presence of the Divine Being in the awful institution. But, as it is explained by *you*, that is, by your Protestant Churches, such inference is incomprehensible. For, how is it possible to imagine, that a man can be "*guilty*," as the Apostle declares he is, "*of the body and blood of the Lord*," if the body and blood be not truly, and really, present in the sacrament?

In order, therefore, that the faithful may avoid the guilt of an unworthy participation of the hallowed food, the Apostle next inculcates the obligation of a rigid examination, which the communicant ought to institute, before he ventures to approach to the holy table. "*Let a man*," he says, "*examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*" Even this precaution alone cannot but seem to your Lordship to insinuate that the food, which is thus to be received, is something much more sanctified and awful, than a portion of blessed bread and wine; or than a pious figure, in commemoration of the sufferings and death of Christ.

But see how the Apostle proceeds: what follows, explains,—no words could do so more forcibly,—both the reason of the above precaution, and the nature of the sacred banquet. "*For*," adds the Apostle, "*he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh* DAMNATION *to himself*, NOT DISCERNING THE BODY OF THE LORD." Now, after you have weighed this frightful denunciation candidly, and thus seen, that an unworthy communion is so great a crime as to merit everlasting reprobation, can you, let me ask you, seriously believe, that the Eucharist is, after all, neither more nor less in itself, or of its own nature, than a substantial and unchanged portion of bread and wine; or else, but a holy figure? Surely, to attach the punishment of damnation to any participation of objects such as these, is a notion at once extravagant and absurd. The only consistent, and rational, method of explaining the frightful denunciation, or of reconciling it with the ideas of the Divine justice and wisdom, is to suppose, and believe, that Christ Jesus is therefore, Himself, really present in the tremendous mystery. It is thus, and only thus, we "*discern*,"

as the Apostle requires, "*the Body of the Lord:*" and thus also, considering the Sacrament as the purest of all holy things, we, of course, clearly understand, that no crime is more justly deserving of "*damnation*" than its abuse, and profanation, by an unworthy communion. *With* this interpretation of the words of the Apostle, every thing is plain and intelligible: *without it*, every thing is dark and incomprehensible.

But St. Paul continues: and this again is a farther proof and illustration, both of the real presence of Christ Jesus in the mystery, and of the truth of our doctrine relating to it. "*For this cause*," he concludes,—referring to the crime of unworthy communions,—"*for this cause, many among you are weak and sickly; and many sleep.*" That is, so insulting to the divine sanctity are such communions,—because the partakers of them "*do not discern the body of the Lord*,"—that in the severity of his justice and displeasure, God visits them, sometimes with illnesses, sometimes even with death itself.

Thus, then, I have laid before your Lordship those principal passages of the Scriptures, which relate to the mystery of the Eucharist,—appending to them a few brief and obvious considerations. It is not for me to say what impressions they have made upon you. You cannot, however, but feel this,—that, if your Protestant rule of interpreting the Sacred Volume is correct, —those passages do just as clearly establish the certainty of the real presence of Christ Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, as do any passages or texts of the said sacred pages establish or confirm the truth of any other mystery of revelation. Indeed, it is the fact that there is not any one mystery, or tenet, of the Christian code, that is more forcibly attested, and hung round with more convincing evidences, than the mystery of the Eucharist.

V. I might here cite to your Lordship, if not by the way of engaging you to *believe* our doctrine,—at least to lessen your *disbelief* of it,—the opinions and authority of the early Fathers of the Church, concerning the divine institution. For, if opinions and authority ought, any where, or upon any subject, to command deference and respect, it should be the opinions and authority of an order of men like these—the best, the wisest, that adorn our Christian annals. However, I shall not

appeal to their testimony in the present stage of our discussion. I will do so only when I come to that part of our considerations, which form the chief subject of your perplexities,—the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. The omission here is, in fact, immaterial: for the same documents of the Fathers, which attest the truth of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, attest equally, and alike, the doctrine of the real presence. So that passing over these, for the present, I will just show your Lordship the sentiments and tenets of your chief Protestant Churches, and of their most distinguished writers, respecting the holy mystery; that is, respecting the real presence.

VI. To ascertain exactly what has been at various epochs, or what is, at present, the direct belief of any of your Protestant Churches, concerning almost any of the doctrines of revelation, would be a perplexing, and arduous, task;—so many, and so frequent, have been the variations and changes, which they have every where, and unceasingly, undergone. This is even the remark of Mosheim. "To judge," says the historian, "of the belief of the Reformed Churches, by their creeds, confessions, symbolic books, or public declarations, is not now any criterion at all of the real opinions and sentiments of their respective members." These, which were once deemed sacred instruments, and which, indeed, the pastors of each Church still solemnly sign, and even, in many instances, still more solemnly, swear to—these, the historian adds, "are now little better than a dead letter; obsolete things, which few, or none, believe." These are very awkward and untoward facts. For, no Church that has varied, or varies, in its faith, can, with consistency, be deemed a true Church; since nothing is so unvarying, and unvariable, as the divine doctrines of religion.

Wherefore, in regard of the doctrine which I am now discussing,—that of the *real presence*,—it is a fact, that not only have the largest and most learned portions of your Protestant Churches admitted this dogma, but that, moreover, they have advocated and defended it, with a greater degree of ardour, than any other tenet of their belief. This was the case with all the Lutheran Churches, and communions,—once the most widely extended societies of the Reformation. Luther, indeed, informs

us, that, urged by rancour and hostility to his parent Church, he had strained every nerve, and conjured up every argument, in order, if possible, to persuade himself into the disbelief and denial of the mystery. "*But,*" he adds, "*in vain. I wished to have denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, on purpose to have the more effectually vexed the Papists. But the words of the Scriptures are so plain and strong in favour of the mystery, that, spite of all my wishes, and although I strained every nerve to reject it, yet I could never bring my mind to adopt the bold expedient.*" (Ep. Car. Amic.) In like manner, he allows,—speaking of the belief of the ancient Fathers, (this is a testimony which should strike your Lordship, and every Protestant)—he allows that, "*amongst all the ancient Fathers of the Church, there is not so much as* ONE, *that ever entertained a doubt concerning the mystery of the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.*" (Defens. Verb. Cœnæ.) Nay, he even goes so far as to declare, that the denial of the real presence "*is a piece of downright blasphemy; an impeachment of the divine veracity; an act of treachery to Christ; and an artifice of seduction to the public.*" Whence, also, he elegantly calls the deniers and disbelievers of the sacred institution, "*a set of deviled, bedeviled, perdeviled, and superdeviled wretches.*" Such as these were the sentiments and the belief of Luther, respecting the doctrine of the real presence: and such also, as his, were the opinions of all the Lutheran Churches; opinions, too, which they long laboured to propagate, not only by every effort of industry and learning, but even by every exertion of force, violence, and bloodshed itself. The doctrine is still the *professed doctrine* of these Churches; but alas! such is the progress of infidelity and indifference, it is a doctrine which *now*, neither their pastors, nor their flocks, hardly any where, if any where, believe.*

* The first apostle of the Reformation who denied the real presence, was Zuinglius. And he, according to his own account of the matter, was instructed and engaged to do so in consequence of "*a vision;*" that is, in consequence of as pitiful a delusion, as any thing that is recorded in the history of fanaticism, or in the annals of religious folly. "*It was,*" says Zuinglius, "*on the thirteenth of April, early in the morning, that the event took place. My conscience obliges me to tell the truth, although I do it with*

It was from Luther principally and his disciples, that the first founders of the Church of England derived the chief part of their peculiar doctrines. From them they borrowed their doctrine concerning the Eucharist, professing, along with them, the belief in the real presence. This belief, accordingly, is no doubt the *genuine* belief and doctrine of your Established Church. Thus, referring, for example, to your Common Prayer Book,—the most authentic document of your religion,—we find there the following question and reply:—"*What is the inward part of the Sacrament?*" The answer is,—"*The body and blood of Christ, which are* VERILY, *and* INDEED, *taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.*" In like manner, in the action of receiving the Sacrament, the communicants are instructed to address themselves to God in expressions, such as these:—"*Grant to us, therefore, so to eat the* FLESH *of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ; and so to drink his* BLOOD, *that our sinful bodies may be made clean by* HIS BODY."

some reluctance. Early in the morning, I seemed to myself, in my sleep, to be seriously disputing with my antagonist. I was, by and bye, struck dumb, and so much confused, as to be unable to defend what I knew at the same time to be the truth. At once, most opportunely for me, there appeared to me a MONITOR. *But, whether he were* WHITE OR BLACK, *I do not now remember. He said to me, You Dunce! why don't you answer what is written in Exodus* xii. 2. —'*It is the Pasch, that is, the Passover of the Lord.' Having been thus favoured by the vision, I at once awoke, jumped out of bed, examined the passage referred to, and by the light of it, I dispelled every doubt from my own mind, as well as from the minds of my hearers.*"

Such is the relation given by Zuinglius himself of this very important revelation!—such the origin and the cause of the disbelief and rejection of the first and best of all the divine institutions of Christianity! How the followers of the Reformer, or the public, on hearing or reading the pitiful tale, could possibly have given any credit to it, is what ought to appear surprising. But that they should have believed and given credit to it, "*so as to have dispelled every doubt from their minds,*" this is what ought to appear absolutely impossible. Luther, speaking of the enlightened "*white or black Monitor,*" calls him "the Father of lies:" whilst, describing the followers of Zuinglius, he denominates these a set of "*masked devils,—Diaboli larvati, heretics, infidels, blasphemers, pagans,*" *&c.* However, so it *now* is: for, notwithstanding all the folly of the above scene, and the impurity of the source from which the doctrine is derived, the doctrine of Zuinglius is, after all, *that* which at present forms, and indeed has long formed, the prevailing tenet of all the Protestant Churches.

Delivering the Communion, the minister says,—"*The* BODY *of our Lord, Jesus Christ, which was* GIVEN *for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. The* BLOOD *of our Lord, Jesus Christ, which was* SHED *for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.*" Such is the language of your Book of Common Prayer. And surely, no terms, no possible form of expression, no language made use in our Catholic Church, can better, or more clearly than this, point out the doctrine, or mark the belief of the *real presence.**

Referring, in the next place, to the sentiments of the most distinguished writers of your Church,—the men who by their learning and talents have given the chief lustre to its annals,—you find that these, during a series of its brightest periods, were alike the believers and the defenders of the mystery. "*As for the Church of England,*" says Archbishop Laud, "*nothing is more plain, than that she believes and teaches the true and real presence of Christ in the Sacrament.*" "*We believe,*" says Bishop Andrews to Bellarmin, "*the real presence as much as you do.*" Archbishop Secker, in his Lectures, attests, that "*The Church of England has always acknowledged the real presence.*" I could cite a multitude of attestations to the same effect, and similar to these. But these, I conceive, are sufficient to convince your Lordship, that the *genuine* doctrine of your Established Church is that of the *real presence.* Ob-

* If there be any instruments of faith which ought to be clear, and easy to be understood, they should, of course, be those which are designed for the use and instruction of the general body of society,—for the simple, the illiterate, the ignorant, and so on. For this reason, nothing ought to be so plain as a catechism; nothing so intelligible as the prayers addressed to Almighty God. The words should, in each case, exactly mean what they clearly and directly express. By this rule, then, only consider the above words. The Catechism says,—"The *body* and *blood* of Christ are "VERILY, AND INDEED," received in the Lord's Supper. Now, what ideas, or what notion, can a child or any simple or ignorant individual, form of these words, or borrow from them, save that, if the *body* and *blood* of Christ are "*verily and indeed*" received, the body and blood *must* then, of course, be *verily and indeed,*—that is, really and truly, present in the Sacrament. To suppose that a child, or any uninstructed person, would infer, *from such mode of expression,* that the body and blood are present only *in figure,* or by *faith,* or as emblems, are notions, it is quite obvious, that could never enter into heads, or minds, like theirs.

serve, however, that I speak only of the *genuine* doctrine of this Church. For I am very far from thinking that such is *now* either the doctrine which its clergy teach, or which its members, with hardly an exception, any where, believe. Its clergy, just like the clergy alluded to by Mosheim, have nearly all, if not all, (such is the march of intellect) abandoned this once revered, and long-defended, tenet of your Church. By an unhappy, though not a singular revolution *in them*,—they now believe, as Calvinists, or Zuinglians. "*On many points*," says Bishop Marsh,—the most learned member of your Episcopal bench,—"*on many points I am a Calvinist. I am a Calvinist in the doctrine of the Eucharist.*" This opinion of the learned prelate, but still more that of Zuinglius, appears to be, at present, the prevailing sentiments of your clergy and their flocks, reducing, thus, the great mystery to no mystery whatsoever.

VII. Having thus stated to your Lordship a few of the many attestations and arguments, which establish the truth of our doctrine relating to the real presence, I come now to those which regard the mystery of *Transubstantiation*,—the chief source, you tell me, of your present perplexities and doubts. However, before I present to you the direct proofs of this great miracle, I will first,—by way of preparing you the better for its belief,—suggest to you a few preliminary observations.

In the first place then, I will observe, that the Protestants, with hardly an exception,—and I dare say it is the case with your Lordship,—entertain very mistaken notions concerning our doctrine, or the nature of Transubstantiation. They look upon Transubstantiation as a more incomprehensible, and a more incredible, mystery than the real presence. Whereas, such is by no means the case. The mystery of the Eucharist consists, —I do not say solely,—but, principally, in the *real presence*. Now *this* is a truth more sublime and wonderful than any thing comprised in the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Transubstantiation, in fact, is not so much the mystery itself of the Eucharist, as its consequence and effect. It is the way, or method, by which we explain the mystery, and explain it, as Mr. Hallam has remarked, more consistently than it is done by any of the leading systems of the Protestant Churches. Speak-

ing of these, and comparing them with ours, he candidly says: —"*In my opinion that of the Church of Rome, by Transubstantiation, is the best.*"

In the next place, it is a fact that, although your writers and your preachers are for ever deriding our belief, and insulting our doctrine of the mystery, yet, amongst these unholy scoffers, hardly is there any where an individual who has either studied the awful subject candidly, or who really knows correctly what our doctrine is relating to it. Their works and sermons abundantly, and every day, prove this. Our doctrine relating to the mystery is simply this:—we believe, that by an act of that same Divine Omnipotence, which *by a word* called the whole order of nature into existence, and *by a word* again still regulates its movements,—by the operation of this *same Omnipotence*, and by virtue of *this same word*, directed by Christ Jesus to be used, and pronounced, by his priesthood in the solemn act of Consecration, the SUBSTANCE of bread and wine is miraculously converted into the SUBSTANCE of the flesh and blood of the Sacred Being; the outward appearances, meanwhile, of the consecrated elements,—*by the will and virtue of that same infinite Power*,—remaining still unaltered and unchanged. So that we, thus, consider every thing in the holy mystery as the work, and effect, of the Divine Omnipotence.

In the third place, when we speak of the body of Christ, as present in the Sacrament, we do not speak of his body as present there, in the same manner in which it existed whilst he dwelt on earth, and conversed with his disciples; that is, we do not speak of a body in its ordinary, and natural, shape and proportions. We speak of a true and real body; but of a body which has passed into a different state from ours; of a body which is now glorified and impassable; in short, of a body whose mode of being,—since this is a mystery,—is beyond the reach of our imperfect comprehension. Thus, neither can we explain or understand, by what means our Saviour, contrary to all the known laws of matter, could possibly have entered,—"*the doors being shut*,"—into the apartment where the disciples were assembled. Neither, in like manner, do we comprehend how, whilst still seated at the right hand of his eternal Father, he appeared to St. Paul, as he had done also to St. Peter and to

more than five hundred of the brethren. Why, even in regard of these bodies of ours,—these, although still remaining true and real bodies, will, at the time of their resurrection, be completely changed. They will then deposit their earthly and sensual qualities, and be clothed,—provided they be the bodies of the just,—in properties heavenly and angelical. "*For, in heaven,*" says Christ Jesus, "*we shall neither eat nor drink, but be like unto the angels.*" "*The body,*" says St. Paul, "*is sown in corruption: it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour: it is raised in glory. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body: for there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*" Considering only these circumstances, the inference cannot but seem obvious, that, if it should so please the mercy and the wisdom of our great Redeemer, —He, in the plenitude of his power, is, without any even the slenderest difficulty, able to bestow his sacred flesh upon us, under whatsoever form he may deem most proper. Indeed, making the supposition, that he does think proper to bestow himself upon us in the holy mystery, it is again manifest, that, under no possible form, could he have done this more effectually for the exercise of our faith; more amiably for the delicacy of our feelings; more appropriately for the nourishment of our souls, than under the humble, simple, and pleasing appearances of bread and wine. To have given us his body and blood, under the ordinary shapes of flesh and blood, would have been painful to our sensibilities, and a bar to the delightful participations of the Sacrament.

There is, too, another consideration, which I will just suggest to your Lordship's piety; and which we ought always to carry with us in all our views and contemplations of the mysteries of religion. It is this,—that the whole system of the Christian religion is a system of *love*. Every thing in the divine dispensation may be compressed into these two words,—"*God hath so loved the world.*" This is the clue to all our mysteries, the key to all God's counsels, and the best solution of every difficulty. Therefore, as an act of prudence, as well as of piety, carry with you these useful recollections in the discussion, above all, of what relates to the mystery of the Eucharist; for, this, beyond any other institution of the Christian code, is the dis-

tinguishing testimonial of the Saviour's love for man. Do this, and it will contribute powerfully to allay your doubts, and to reconcile your reason with your faith.

Having premised these observations, I will proceed to examine the arguments which establish the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and which do this, we contend, just as clearly as they establish the truth of the real presence. I will here, too, remind your Lordship, that in my rapid discussion of the important question, I shall still adhere to that same rule of interpretation, which I have hitherto observed ;—following, that is, your own Protestant principle, which requires, that the plain words and texts of the Scriptures shall be explained and understood in their plain and obvious sense.

VIII. Placing then, my Lord, once more before you the spectacle, and circumstances, of the Last Supper, attend seriously to the declarations of your Saviour on the awful occasion, and candidly weigh the direct meaning of his words. After having, with great solemnity, consecrated the sacred elements, you see Him then present the divine food to his disciples, with the assurance that it was His body. "*Take, and eat,*" he said to them, "THIS IS *My body.*" Now that these words do imply the certainty of a *real presence,*—this I have already shown you, is the concurrent agreement,—at least, it was so *once,*—both of the Lutheran Churches, and of your own Establishment. Well then, I will put the question at once to your Lordship's own good sense. If they do prove this,—if they establish the truth of a real presence, why do they not equally establish the truth of a *substantial* presence? For, a *real* presence, which is not at the same time a *substantial* presence, appears to me to be very like an absurdity.

According, to the ordinary, and established, rules of social, or human, language, the sentence or words of Christ, "*Take, and eat,* THIS IS *My body,*" are similar to the following:—supposing that myself were to present to your Lordship, for example, a piece of bread, saying at the same time, "*Eat this, it is a piece of bread:*" in this case my meaning would, of course, be,—neither do the words admit any other sense,—that what I thus presented was both really, and substantially, a piece

of bread,—bread, and nothing else. If such were not the case, or if what I thus offered were not *substantially* what I had declared it to be, my assertion would be either a falsehood, or nonsense. The fact is, that by the common laws and use of language, there is no difference, nor any distinction, whatsoever between the *reality* of an object and its *substance*. So that when I say, "This is a piece of bread," I am at once, and just as well, understood to mean, that it is *substantially*, and to all intents and purposes, a piece of bread, and only bread, as if, when I presented it, I had needlessly added the term *substantially*. Such as this is, in every society, the fixed order of human discourse. Therefore, unless it can be shown that our all-wise Redeemer thought proper, on the occasion of his Last Supper, to violate this order (and that occasion, as I have remarked, was precisely the occasion when he should not have violated it; when, beyond any other time, he should have expressed himself most plainly, exactly meaning what his words declared), unless this departure from the established rules of language can be proved, the consequence then manifestly is, that when the Divine Being positively declared, "THIS IS *My body*," he as certainly meant,—and was as clearly understood to mean,—that it was as completely and substantially his body, as if he had added those superfluous words to his assurance.

"THIS," he said to his Apostles, "IS *My body*." Now, if it were not such,—if it was still, *substantially*, only a piece of bread,—then it must be admitted that the declaration is, at all events, a very strange one,—as strange, indeed, as if I, taking up a loaf of bread, were to say, "This is the body of such a one." For the case is, that between a piece of bread, and a human body, there is neither any resemblance, nor any connexion, whatsoever. The one is neither by custom, nor convention, nor by figure,—nor by any thing else,—the representation, nor the emblem, nor the sign, of the other. If, therefore, when our Saviour declares, "THIS IS My body," it is not truly and substantially such, but a piece of bread, still remaining bread, in such case, not only is his language strange, it is absolutely false. For bread, still remaining bread, can neither really be, nor reasonably be called, "*a body*." But, at all events, if the Divine Being did indeed design to call a piece of bread "His

body," he then ought, surely, both in charity and in justice, to have given some kind of reason and explanation; or, at least, some warning, or hint, for so singular and unaccountable a deviation from all the fixed laws of language, and from all the notions of social life. Of such explanation, however, or of such warning, the Scripture presents to us neither any proof, nor any vestige.

"THIS," says Christ, "IS *My body*." Only mark well, my Lord, the two expressive words,—the pronoun, "THIS," and the verb "IS." He does not say, "HERE *is My body;* IN *this is My body;* WITH *this is My body*." In any of these cases there might have been room for perplexity and cavil. No; employing the demonstrative "THIS,"—which always points out, and indicates the *substance* of any object,—and using the positive but plain affirmative, "IS," he simply declares, in the usual language, and sense of men, "THIS IS *My body;*" an assurance this, as I have just now said, which would not be true, if it were not *substantially* his body, since *bread* can neither be his body, nor has he any where established it as the sign of his body. Therefore, in order to reconcile the assurances of our Saviour with the truth, and his conduct with the dictates of charity and wisdom, the most rational, or rather, the *only* rational expedient is, to suppose, that, by an act of his Divine Omnipotence, for which he had before prepared the minds of his Apostles, and his followers, he converted the *substance* of the bread into the *substance* of his flesh, only veiling this under the humble appearance of the earthly element,—an act, which in Him was easy; and moreover, consistent,—seeing that the holy institution was designed to be mysterious. It was thus, no doubt, that the Apostles must have understood him; for they had beforehand heard his promises, seen his miracles, and knew his power. Thus also it is, that his Church,—the interpreter of his words, and the depository of his will,—has, in every age, explained his declaration. And can you then, my Lord, seriously believe that, as in his omniscience he knew that such would be the case,—can you believe, that, if such interpretation were wrong, he would not, in the excess of his mercy, have better instructed, and undeceived, his beloved "*fold?*"

"THIS," he says, "IS *My body;*" words, as I have re-

marked, sufficient of themselves to establish his *substantial* presence in the mystery. However, lest they should not be sufficiently understood, the divine Saviour, by an act of his tenderness, in order to remove every doubt respecting their signification, and to prevent, or check, the artifices of error, was pleased to add to them the following express assurance, "*This is My body,* WHICH IS GIVEN *for you;*" or as St. Paul, instructed by the Lord himself, perhaps still more strikingly expresses it, "*My body, which is* BROKEN *for you.*" If incredulity, my Lord, and prejudice, were not blind, or unwilling to see the truth, hardly, it should seem, could these words, or declarations, be misunderstood. We have thus the express and plain assurance of Him, who is power, and goodness, and wisdom itself, that the body which is given to us in the sacrament of the Eucharist, is that very same body which was once "GIVEN" for our salvation, and "BROKEN" for us upon the altar of the cross. If these words do not imply a true and *substantial* presence of the sacred victim, I put it then to your own ingenuity to find out what other form of terms could possibly express it better. If indeed, such *is not* their real signification, I will then repeat what I have said already, in regard of the real presence, that our great Redeemer, with all his wisdom and his mercy, has expressed himself most strangely, and in a way, moreover, that is directly calculated to mislead us,—engaging us to believe, that what he assures us is his body,—the very body which was "*given and broken for us,*"—is still, after all, neither more nor less than a morsel of real, and unchanged, bread. You, no doubt, feel the impropriety of so unbecoming an imputation.

If these few rapid considerations have not sufficed to convince your Lordship of the truth of our doctrines concerning the adorable mystery, they must, at all events, have engaged you to feel this,—that, inasmuch as they are judged of, or decided by your Protestant rules of biblical interpretation,—no Christian mysteries are proved, or attested better. In regard, moreover, of our doctrine of Transubstantiation, besides being thus clearly evinced by the words of Christ, and resulting directly from the fact of the real presence, it is, at the same time, the only rational and consistent method of explaining the mystery. For,

if what was bread becomes, as your Church teaches, by virtue of consecration, "*Verily, and indeed, the flesh of Christ*," what inference can, in this case, be more natural and obvious, than that, therefore, the substance of the bread has been thus converted into the *substance* of that heavenly food? precisely as at the feast of Cana, the substance of the water was changed into the substance of the wine. It is, in reality, plain, that no substance *remaining what it actually is*, can possibly be, at the same time, *another* substance. Thus, the *wine* at Cana was not, —could not be, at the same time, *water:* it could only be one thing or the other; not both together. Therefore, in like manner, if the Eucharist be "*Verily, and indeed*," as your Church asserts, the body of Christ, it is not—cannot be, of course, at the same time, bread. Whence, also, the plain consequence is, that by an act of the Divine Power, authorised by our Saviour, and performed by his priesthood in the celebration of the sacred mysteries, the substance of the bread is changed into the substance of His flesh; thus verifying his declaration, "THIS IS *My body, which is* BROKEN *for you*." *

* In a preceding note I have stated it as a curious fact, that the first cause of the rejection of the real presence by a great body of the Protestants was the enlightened instruction which Zuinglius received from his "*Black or white monitor*," on the occasion of his conference with that learned theologian, whom Luther very impolitely calls the "*Devil*."

Now it is a fact, not at all less curious, that the first cause of the rejection of Transubstantiation by another great body of the Protestant Churches, is founded precisely upon the strength of a similar conference of Luther with the very same learned theologian. Luther, just as Zuinglius has done, has himself given us a long and minute account of the scene which took place on the awful occasion, and of the dialogue which ensued between the two well-trained disputants. The occurrence took place at the solemn hour of midnight. "*At midnight*," he tells us, "*I was suddenly seized with a dreadful fright. Satan began to dispute with me in the following manner:—'Hear,' he said, 'O Luther, thou highly learned doctor.' Ibi Satan mecum cœpit ejusmodi disputationem: Audi, inquit, Luthere, doctor perdocte, &c.*" He then goes on in the same strain of happy absurdity which had marked the conference of Zuinglius, and relates the very important contest. The conclusion of it was, that as the Devil proved the better divine, Luther was persuaded to reject Transubstantiation, just as Zuinglius, by the eloquence of the same orthodox monitor, had been engaged to reject the real presence. Such was the origin, and such were the causes of the rejection, and disbelief, of the two leading and most con-

IX. It is an interesting, as well as a more or less entertaining, subject to trace the reluctant homage which the enemies of our religion, in their quarrels and disputes among themselves, are very frequently induced, or compelled, to pay to the truth of our doctrines, and to the wisdom of our practices. It is strikingly so in regard of the mystery of the Eucharist. In the disputes between the Lutheran, and Calvinistic, sects respecting the holy institution, your Lordship knows with how much acrimony and pious horror, the former reprobated, and condemned, the latter for having rejected the doctrine of the *real presence*, and for refusing to explain, in their literal and obvious sense, those texts and passages of the Scripture, which attest so plainly and positively the truth and certainty of this mystery. So that we have thus in the defence, and favour, of the doctrine of the *real presence* one immense, and perhaps the largest, portion of the Protestant Churches.

In like manner, with respect to our doctrine of Transubstantiation, the circumstance is alike curious, and important. For, here again, we have the whole, and widely extended, bodies of the Sacramentarian and Calvinistic Churches,—not, of course, defending our doctrine of Transubstantiation,—but loudly, and even sternly, maintaining, in opposition to the Lutherans, that if once the doctrine of the real presence is admitted; or if the texts and passages of the Scripture relating to the mystery are to be understood in their literal signification; they then directly, and by a necessary consequence, prove the truth of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Nay, they even contend that the belief and admission of the real presence, without the belief at the same time, and the admission of Transubstantiation, is neither more nor less than a downright piece of absurdity. So that thus again, precisely as we have the whole body of the Lutheran

soling mysteries of the Christian code,—founded upon a delusion as pitiful and ridiculous, as it was impious and profane. Speaking of the miserable tale, Chillingworth states it as his opinion, that the chief reason why the Devil argued against Transubstantiation, was to induce Luther to continue saying Mass.

It would seem that the great apostle of the Reformation was wont to hold frequent conferences with the Devil. For he tells us, that "*He made him pass very often bitter and distressing nights:—Multas noctes mihi satis amarulentas, et acerbas, reddere ille novit.*"

Churches approving of the doctrine of the real presence, we have here the entire mass of the Sacramentarian and Calvinistic Churches, acknowledging,—*on the supposition of the truth of the real presence*,—the truth also of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. But, as the question here is curious, as well as interesting, and as the concessions of adversaries have frequently more weight than the best arguments from the supporters of any cause, I will, for these reasons, present to your Lordship a few passages from the works of the authors, and leading members, of the last-named Churches.

"*If the word* IS," says Zuinglius in his Reply to Billicanus, "*is to be taken literally, then no doubt the Papists are in the right; and it is but proper to believe, that the bread is changed into flesh.*" In his treatise on the Last Supper, he reasons again in the same manner: "*If*," he says, "*in the words, 'This is My body,' the word 'IS' is to be explained without any figure, then it is impossible but that the substance of the bread should have been changed into the substance of the body of Christ; so that what was bread before, should be now bread no longer.*" In his work against Luther, he tells the great Reformer, "*If the word 'THIS' denotes bread, and the words of Christ are not to be interpreted figuratively, in this case it follows, that what* WAS *bread before, is suddenly changed into the body of Christ;—Jam panis transit in corpus Christi; et est corpus subito, quod jam panis erat.*" He says elsewhere to the arch-apostle:—"*If you are so obstinate as not to admit our figurative sense, then the Pope is in the right in asserting that the bread is changed into the body of Christ.*"

In like manner the learned reformer, Beza,—at the conference of Montbelliard,—comparing our belief with that of those Protestant Churches which admitted the real presence, but rejected Transubstantiation, says:—"*Of the two doctrines, that of the Catholics is the most consistent, and the most conformable to the institution.*" Hospinian asserts the same. "*If the words of Christ*," he says, "*are not to be taken figuratively, then the doctrine of the Papists is true. For Christ does not say,* HERE *is My body, or My body is* WITHIN *this, or* OUT *of this, or this* CONTAINS *My body; but simply the words,* THIS IS *My body.*" Such, too, as these, are the reasonings of

Calvin, and of the most learned Calvinistic writers; all allowing and contending, that if the words of Christ in the holy institution are not to be interpreted figuratively, they in this case clearly establish the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

I will cite to your Lordship but one other testimony from the schools of the above believers, respecting our Catholic doctrine. It is a testimony peculiarly striking, and which, as it was dictated by the united wisdom of a large body of distinguished men, may therefore possess, perhaps, some weight upon your feelings. I allude to the decision of the synod of Czenger. The members of that assembly, after having condemned the doctrine of Luther, and of all the believers in the real presence *without Transubstantiation*, proceed to say:—"*As the wand of Moses did not become a serpent but by Transubstantiation; as water did not become blood in Egypt, nor wine at the marriage-feast of Cana, without a change; so neither can bread in the Eucharist become the body of Christ, unless it be changed into his flesh, by losing the substance of bread.*" Such is the decision of this important Synod,—a decision, as Bossuet remarks, alike replete with good sense, as it is with candour. For, bread, still continuing bread, can no more be the body of Christ, than a wand, still remaining a wand, can be a serpent; or than water, still being water, could have been either blood in Egypt, or wine at Cana. In short, comparing doctrine with doctrine, and *our* doctrine of the real presence *by the means of Transubstantiation*, with *your*, or your Churches', doctrine of the mystery,—that is, of the real presence, *without Transubstantiation*,—we have thus in our favour, besides the plainest texts of the Scripture, the decided approbation of the writers and schools of the Sacramentarian and Calvinistic communions, all candidly acknowledging that, if the words of Christ, in the institution of the holy banquet, are to be understood in their literal signification, they, in this case, establish clearly the truth of our doctrine of Transubstantiation, as the obvious, and necessary, consequence of the real presence.*

* For some time after the beginning of the Reformation, Luther did not condemn the doctrine of Transubstantiation. He then allowed his followers to believe, as they thought proper on the subject. "*I allow*," he

X. Having thus proposed to your Lordship's consideration those Scriptural evidences, which establish the truth of our doctrine, I will proceed to lay before you a brief statement of the testimonies, and authorities, which very strikingly and forcibly confirm it.

It is a maxim, then, which your Lordship is too reasonable to contest, that the best and safest commentary upon the words of Christ, or the texts of the Scriptures, is the interpretation, which has always—in every age from the time of the Apostles to the present day—been attached to them by the pastors and members of the Church. There is not, in fact, any maxim of religion that is more undeniable, and conclusive, than this :—that, whatsoever has been believed, "*always, every where, and by all,—semper, ubique, et ab omnibus,*—is not, therefore, a human invention, but a revealed, and certain, truth." Indeed, not only this, but it is the case in reason itself, that no principle presents a more incontestable evidence of the certainty of any proposition, or of

said, "*all who choose it, to believe either one opinion or the other. Let each one know, that, without endangering his salvation, he may adopt either one or the other.*" (Cap. De Ba. T. ii.) It is true, indeed, that subsequently he changed his language. But, I have stated the reason of the change. It was, as the great Reformer not only owns, but boasts,—because his monitor, whom himself calls "*Satan,*" had now instructed and persuaded him, that Transubstantiation is an error.

In this country, for a considerable time after the creation of the Established Church, even till a late period in the reign of the Second Charles, its bishops and divines did not, in general, make any great opposition to the belief in Transubstantiation. "*Transubstantiation,*" says the candid, and learned, Archdeacon Glover, "*did not then form*" (he alludes to the time of Elizabeth,) "*either the chief, or even a principal feature in the separation of the two Churches. In fact, there have never ceased to be amongst our own clergy,—even among the best and brightest pillars of our faith, very considerable differences of opinion respecting the awful mystery.*" (Remarks.) The fact is, that, until the epoch above alluded to, many of the most eminent divines of the Established Church considered, and allowed, the doctrine of Transubstantiation to be the most obvious and consistent method of accounting for the mystery of the real presence. "*Many Protestants,*" says Bishop Forbes, "*too boldly, and too dangerously, deny that God can transubstantiate the bread into the body of Christ. For my part, I approve of the opinion of the Wittenberg divines, who assert, that the power of God is so great, that He can change the substance of bread into the substance of the body and blood of Christ.*" (De Euch.)

the reality of any fact, than the constant, united, and perennial agreement of mankind in their admission and belief. It is this striking harmony, founded alike upon the immutable laws of providence and reason, that constitutes a *moral* certitude—a certitude, not only excluding all rational doubt, but creating a conviction more powerful and satisfactory than any speculative argument whatsoever. Thus, let the question, or the fact, be what they may,—whenever it so happens that they are, and always have been, admitted and attested by innumerable witnesses,—men of different ages and different nations; of different characters and different interests; men, whose ideas, prejudices, and passions, are various, and dissimilar; men, again, too enlightened to be deceived, and too virtuous to deceive; where such as this is the case, it is impossible to suppose,—it would be worse than absurd to suppose,—that their united testimony could be false. Their united testimony, thus grounded and recommended, forms an *evidence*, which nothing but the most obstinate incredulity, and the blindest prejudices, can pretend to call in question.

Accordingly, what I now invite your Lordship to do, is this: —I request you to apply the above considerations, or maxims, to the subject of your present investigation,—the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. Conducted by them, you will early discover, that there exists as manifest a chain of evidences in favour of this mystery, as any thing that occurs, either in the records of history, or in the annals of Christian literature. You will find men of every age, and every nation; of every character and station; men of opposite interests and of different views; the bad equally with the good; the learned equally with the illiterate;—you will find all these, every where, always, and alike, united in the belief, and combined in the worship, of the sacred mystery; regarding it even as the chief and dearest object of their piety and adoration. Whence also, this fact is true,—that hardly any where, in the whole history of controversy, can there be found a grosser attempt to impose upon the credulity of the public, than those daring assertions of *your* writers, who unblushingly proclaim, that our doctrine of Transubstantiation is but a modern innovation, the effect of popish artifice, and the dictate of superstition.

But, before I state to you those *positive* evidences which attest the perennial belief of the mystery, I will first call your attention to certain facts, which I will denominate *negative* evidences; but which, if candidly considered, are in reality equivalent to any thing that is received as positive. At all events, they form an argument, which your Lordship's good sense will, I am sure, admit as the strongest presumption in favour of our belief.

It is then a well-known fact, that, during the early ages of the Church,—during the periods of the Pagan persecutions,—there was no secret, however important, that was deemed nearly so sacred; nor any, therefore, that was observed so religiously, as the secret which regarded the mystery of the Eucharist, and the participation of the Holy Communion. It was denominated "*The Discipline of the Secret.*" So profound was the veneration of the faithful in reference to it, and so strict the precept of keeping it always inviolate, that the pastors and Fathers of the Church were wont to declare, that, rather than betray it, it were better, nay, even an imperious duty, to sacrifice life itself. It is, in reality, true, that, rather than do this,—that is, rather than reveal the awful secret,—there were multitudes who did suffer torments; some, who laid down their lives. Such was the nature of "*The Discipline of the Secret.*"

Now, my Lord, I will here, in the first place, just remark, how impossible it is to reconcile any thing in the above facts,—the deep secrecy, the severe injunctions of the pastors, the heroic piety of the faithful,—with the belief and doctrines of any of your Protestant Churches, respecting the adorable mystery. For, if the pastors of those ages, or the faithful, had considered the sacred institution,—like your Churches,—either as no other than a holy figure; or else, only as a portion of blessed and sanctified, but still unchanged, and substantial bread and wine,—can you, I ask, seriously conceive, that there could, in such cases, have existed any necessity, or even so much as the slenderest motive, for all such solemn and inviolable secrecy? In such cases, as there was no real mystery in them, so neither was there any real cause for any secrecy whatsoever. Secrecy, in such cases, would have been an act of imprudence, or, rather, of folly. For what, during the epochs referred to, was the situ-

ation of the Christian public? They were, every where, calumniated, reviled, and persecuted, by the surrounding pagans. They were accused of committing in their religious assemblies the most heinous crimes and enormities. They were even put, not unfrequently, to the torture, in order to extort from them, if possible, what passed there upon those occasions. Now, surely, if they had looked upon the Eucharist as a mere holy rite, designed as a commemoration of the sufferings and death of Christ, and its participation, as the act of receiving what was *substantially* but bread and wine,—if such had been their belief of the Sacrament,—why not, in this case, have at once thrown open the doors of their assemblies, and exposed to the public view the simple, harmless, and inoffensive, character of their observances? Why not even have invited their persecutors to attend thereat, in order to see with their own eyes, that what was passing there, was neither more nor less than piously eating a little bread, and drinking a little wine, as memorials of the death of Christ, and as emblems of their own mutual union amongst themselves? Every thing, it is quite manifest, would, with your Protestant notions of the mystery, have urged and impelled them to do this,—prudence, common sense, solicitude for their own security, and charity even for the pagan. In short, nothing can be more obvious, than that to pretend to reconcile the impenetrable secrecy, and the whole conduct of the first Christians, in relation to the Eucharist, with the belief and opinions of your Protestant Churches, is alike inconsistent and preposterous.

But see now, my Lord, and consider the secrecy, and the conduct, of these Christian heroes, as they bear relation to *our* doctrine, and as they are connected with *our* belief. Here every thing, both in their secrecy, and their entire conduct, appears only natural and coherent. It is precisely what the pious and well-instructed Catholic would equally, if placed in similar circumstances to theirs, both feel and practise, at the present day, since there is nothing in the divine order of religion, that *we* consider more sacred and adorable, than the mystery of our altars. *We* too, therefore,—if *now* the holy dispensation were exposed to the insults and ridicule of the profane,—should endeavour to conceal it from the knowledge,

and its celebration from the gaze of the public and the curious. Accordingly, it is by this rule,—that is, on account of the infinite sanctity of the mystery,—that it is easy to explain, why, in the early ages, the pastors of the Church were so careful to enforce, and the faithful so scrupulous to observe, the deepest secrecy in its regard. Their secrecy *then* was but the natural, and necessary, result of their belief. For, had the pagan been admitted into their assemblies, and heard the nature of the sacrifice described, they would, in their ignorance, have ridiculed it as a piece of folly; and have blasphemed it as an act of the wildest superstition. Their prejudices would have been increased, and their rancour heightened against a religion, and a mystery, which men could only be induced to reverence and believe, by the process of instruction, and by a course of gradual and slow advances. Thus, therefore, it was, that respect for the divine institution on one side, and prudence and charity on the other, induced the early pastors of the Church to be extremely careful to conceal, both its nature, and its celebration, from the knowledge of the public.

Yes; and not only was this the case, in regard of the pagan public, but, moreover, (such was the veneration of these holy men for the mystery) they still farther were wont cautiously to hide even its very nature from the knowledge of their own flocks, until such time, as having been well instructed, and long, and prudently tried, they were now at length deemed fitted and prepared for the awful revelation. Thus, if your Lordship only consult the instructions, which those pious and enlightened guardians of the Sacrament were used to address to the Catechumens, Postulants, and so on, who had not as yet been admitted to the holy table, nor initiated into the full acquaintance with the divine oblation, you will find that, even in these instructions,—although addressed most commonly to persons already eminent for their virtue,—those prudent men, notwithstanding this, still spoke and expressed themselves with the most studious caution and reserve. Their language, upon these occasions, was obscure, and their terms frequently ambiguous. All this was, again, but another piece of consistency; the dictate, and result, of those same prudential motives, which I have just described. It was, lest by speaking openly, they

might have betrayed, too soon, the holy secret, and thus have exposed the divine mystery, either to the possible danger of profanation, or else to the risk of ridicule and insult. Such was the ancient "Discipline of the Secret;" an enigma, which, explained by *our* doctrine, is just as plain and intelligible, as when compared with *yours*, it is unmeaning and incomprehensible.*

XI. As your Lordship may have considered the foregoing arguments as only *negative*, and therefore, as insufficient to establish the consequences which I have deduced from them, I will, for this reason, now lay before you a few of those *positive* attestations, which, both explaining the import of the awful "Secret," and expressing clearly the ancient faith, will leave no doubt upon a mind so candid as yours, what was the doctrine of the early ages of the Church respecting the holy mystery.

Behold, then, the time at length happily arrived, when,—the persecutions being over, and the Church more or less triumphant,—its pastors might now, without danger, or the fear of insult, reveal to the faithful the important secret, and expose publicly the nature of the sacred institution. Accordingly, mark now,—for, these are the occasions and testimonies to which prudence and candour should appeal,—mark now the change of

* It is from certain obscure and ambiguous expressions in the works of the early Fathers, addressed to the *still uninitiated* members of their flocks, that our Protestant adversaries have borrowed their chief arguments against the exact resemblance of *our* doctrine with the belief of the first Christian Churches. This, although an artful stratagem, is, at the same time, a piece of great inconsistency. For, the very obscurity and ambiguity of those expressions,—*since they were directly founded upon the forestated causes*,—so far from proving any difference between *our* doctrine, and that of the early Christians, serve rather to prove the reverse; and make much more *in* our favour than *against* us. At all events, it is not from the instructions, and discourses, addressed *to the new made converts, and to the still uninitiated*, that men, or the Protestant, should appeal, in order to ascertain the exact belief of the early ages, concerning the holy mystery. To expect clearness where obscurity is commanded, or to look for openness where secrecy is ordained, is surely both inconsistent and unreasonable. And hence, therefore, the injustice and the incongruity of those writers of yours, who, citing against our doctrine the alleged authority of the Fathers, appeal only to passages and expressions of the above description.

conduct, and the difference of the language, in which those enlightened men began to address their flocks, and to instruct the Neophites, who were preparing to approach to the holy table. Throwing open now the portals of their Churches, and drawing aside the veil, which had hitherto concealed the sanctuary from the public view, they now confidently spoke out their belief; and, discarding their former obscurity of expression, unfolded clearly the divine character and excellences of the mystery. The language which they now made use of, in order to explain and express its nature, was just as plain and intelligible as any thing that either myself, or any Catholic catechist, or preacher, could employ for the same purpose at the present day. Exactly as we do now,—or as our books of piety inculcate,—they formally, and explicitly, teach the reality of Christ's presence in the adorable mystery; the substantial change in the consecrated elements; the infinite sanctity of the divine oblation; the obligation of adoring it, &c.

In regard of *Transubstantiation*,—the present subject of our inquiry, and the mystery, which, once proved, implies and involves in itself the truth of all our other doctrines relating to the divine institution,—in regard of this great object,—this stumbling-block to you Protestants,—I could, without any difficulty, adduce extract upon extract from the writings of the Fathers,—*after* the periods before referred to,—invincibly proving that those enlightened men believed, and taught, upon this awful question, exactly what *we* do now. The few following passages may suffice to illustrate this.

Saint Cyril, addressing himself to the persons who had lately been baptised, speaks to them thus:—"*The bread and wine, which, before the invocation of the blessed Trinity, were only bread and wine, become, after that invocation, the body and blood of Christ. In Cana of Galilee, Christ once changed water into wine, by the mere effort of his will. And shall we think it less deserving of belief, that he changes wine into his blood?*" (Cat. Mystag.)

"*The virtue of consecration,*" says St. Ambrose, "*is more powerful than that of nature; because,* BY IT, *nature itself is* CHANGED. *Moses held the rod. He cast it upon the ground, and it became a serpent. He took the serpent by the tail, and*

it again became a rod." The Saint then, after having adduced other similar miraculous changes recorded in the Scriptures, adds:—"*Now, if the blessing of men was thus powerful enough to change nature, what must we not say of the divine consecration, wherein the very words of Christ operate?*" (L. De Init.)

Saint Chrysostom writes thus:—"*Let us believe God in every thing. Let us not gainsay Him, even when what he says, may appear repugnant to our reason, and to our senses. Let His word be preferred to both. Accordingly, let us apply this to our mysteries, not regarding what is exposed to our eyes, but only* HIS WORD. *For,* HIS WORD *is infallible, and our senses are easily deceived. Wherefore, since His Word declares,—'This is My body,'—let us believe, and view this body with the eyes of our souls.*" (Hom. 83. In. Mat.) Such as this is the manner, in which,—when the Discipline of the Secret was no longer necessary, the pastors of the Church were wont to express their belief in the mystery and miracle of Transubstantiation. No Catholic *now* could possibly express it better.

Similar to these attestations of the Fathers are the testimonies of those equally instructive and important instruments,—*the Liturgies* of the early ages. Liturgies are the authentic documents and declarations of the belief and practices of each, and every sect, or religion,—be these what they may,—to whose faith and worship they are carefully adapted. The ancient Liturgies—and this is a circumstance which deserves attention—were not composed, or, at least, not made public, till towards the close of the fourth, and the beginning of the fifth, centuries. Until these periods, not only was "the Discipline of the Secret" very strictly, and religiously, observed, but even the mere words of the divine consecration were confided *only to the* MEMORY of the priesthood; for fear, lest by being written and transcribed,—and thus rendered public,—they might possibly become the occasion of ridicule or profanation. Hence, therefore, that well-known sentence, and injunction to the priesthood:—"*Sit vobis codex vestra memoria.*" However, at the epochs just referred to,—as the danger was no more, and religion, as I have observed, was more or less triumphant,—so *now* the various Churches began to prepare, and to use their own

respective Liturgies. Well; and what, therefore, again, do these authentic instruments attest respecting the Holy Sacrament? Why, precisely the same thing as what I have just cited from the writings of the Fathers. Speaking of the divine mystery, and of the elements of the Holy Sacrifice, they every where speak of these as being now, by virtue of the miraculous power of consecration, converted into the true and substantial body and blood of Jesus Christ. For example:—

The Liturgy of Jerusalem:—"*Have mercy upon us, O God, Almighty, and send down thy Holy Spirit; that, coming, he may make this bread the life-giving body; the saving body; the heavenly body; the body giving health to our souls, and bodies; the body of our Lord God, and Saviour, for the remission of sin; and for eternal life to those who receive it. Wherefore, we offer up to Thee, O Lord, this tremendous, and unbloody sacrifice, that thou mayest not deal with us according to our iniquities,*" &c.

The Liturgy of Alexandria:—"*O Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son; Word of God the Father, bless this bread, and this chalice, which we have here placed upon this priestly table. Sanctify them; consecrate them; and* CHANGE *them, so that this bread may* BECOME *thy holy body; and what is mixed in this chalice may* BECOME *thy precious blood. We, therefore, adore thee,*" &c.

The Liturgy of Constantinople:—"*We offer up to thee, O God, this reasonable, and unbloody sacrifice: and we beseech thee to send down thy Holy Spirit upon us, and upon these gifts.* MAKE THIS BREAD THE PRECIOUS BODY OF THY CHRIST; AND WHAT IS IN THIS CHALICE, THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF THY *Christ,* CHANGING *them by thy Holy Spirit,*" &c.

Induced by these, and by many other similar evidences,—the most learned, perhaps, amongst all your learned Protestant writers,—Leibnitz, and Grotius,—both of them candidly acknowledge, that the doctrine and belief of Transubstantiation are the genuine doctrine and belief of the ancient Churches. "*Pious antiquity,*" says the former, "*has plainly declared, that the bread is* CHANGED *into the body of Christ. It has instructed us, that,*

by virtue of the action of consecration, A CHANGE OF SUBSTANCE *is effected.*" (Sys. Theol.)

"*I find,*" says the latter, "*in all the Liturgies, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Syriac, and others, prayers addressed to God, that, by His Holy Spirit, He would consecrate the gifts offered up, and make them the body and blood of His Son. I was, therefore, right in asserting, that a practice so ancient and universal, must be considered as having come down from the first ages, and ought not to have been altered.*" (Votum pro Pace.)

Yes; and neither are they the Liturgies of the Catholic Churches alone, that present this uniform testimony and evidence, in favour of the doctrine and belief of Transubstantiation, during the early ages of the Church. The Liturgies, just equally, of those various ancient sects and heresies, which, so early as in the fourth and fifth centuries, detached themselves from the parent Church, exhibit, all of them, upon this subject, —and indeed, upon all that relates to the mystery of the Eucharist,—precisely the same concord and agreement. Differing from each other, as well as from the Catholic Church, in regard to certain articles of faith,—these sects, *without any exception,* have been always, and it is still the case with their present members,—*unanimous,* and united, in their belief and profession, of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. They, all of them,—just as *we* do,—admit, that, by virtue of the sacred action of consecration in the sacrifice of the Mass, the elements of the bread and wine, offered up therein, are miraculously changed into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. Such is the evidence presented, every where, in the still extant Liturgies of the ancient Christian heresies and sects; Liturgies, of course, not of one nation, nor of one language, but of nations diffused, and of languages made use of, throughout various parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe: and which, moreover, have been constantly, and are, as yet, still regularly used in the Churches of each different sect. Thus, speaking, for example, of the pastors of the various Greek Churches, your learned Bishop, Dr. Forbes, says of them:—"*These men, all of them, most openly admit Transubstantiation:—Qui, omnes, apertissime Transubstan-*

tiationem confitentur." (De Euch.) Sir Edwin Sandys says the same. "*With Rome,*" he tells us, "*the Greek Churches concur in opinion of Transubstantiation, and generally in the sacrifice, and whole body, of the Mass. Their Liturgies are the same, too, as in old time, namely, St. Basil's, St. Chrysostom's, and St. Gregory's, translated: and these without any bending of them to that change of language, which their tongue has also suffered.*" (Rel. of West. Rel.)

We know, my Lord, that, blinded by their prejudices and passions, or misled by the love of interest, there are multitudes in life,—and these, too, learned and well instructed,—"who have eyes, and do not,"—*will not*,—"see;" "who have ears, and do not,"—*will not*,—"hear." If such were not the case, how easy would it not be for them to trace in the evidence alone of the above facts, the truth of our doctrines relating to the Eucharist? We have thus the plainest vouchers, and the most incontestable testimonies, of a multitude of different Churches, sects, heresies, and religions, dispersed through a countless number of nations, inheriting, each of them, their doctrine from the earliest ages of Christianity; and moreover, still preserving this uninterrupted, and unchanged, down to the present day,—we have the plainest vouchers of all these communions, admitting and professing, *just as we do*, the doctrine of Transubstantiation, as well as all our other essential tenets respecting the Holy Sacrament. Not their errors in all other regards; not their schisms; not their hostility and rancour towards the Church, which had cut them off from her communion, could ever excite, or induce them, even so much as to call in question the truth of her belief concerning the mystery of the Eucharist. Now, only, my Lord, ask yourself the question:—"Whence, in the first place,—considering the multitude and variety of these sects,—whence all this striking and uniform agreement among themselves, in regard of this mystery in particular? and whence also, in the next place, this exact accordance with the faith of their parent Institute? That they did not, *would not*, borrow their belief from this Church, at any epoch *after* their separation from her,—this is a truth which no one will offer to contest. The ancient separatists,—just like our modern ones,—all, animated by ill-will, detested the Church, which had cut them off from her

society. They, most certainly, neither borrowed, nor would borrow, any thing from her that was *new*. In like manner, it is equally manifest, that the Catholic Church neither did, nor would, borrow her doctrine regarding the mystery from these, or from any one of these sects. This, too, is evident; for this Church borrows no new doctrine from her enemies. Wherefore, the plain and direct consequence is, that *at the eras*, when all the aforesaid sects and heresies separated themselves, or were separated, from the Catholic Church, the doctrine and belief of Transubstantiation were the unanimous and universal doctrine and belief of the Christian universe. I think this inference manifest, and that your Lordship, reasoning honestly upon the subject, will, equally with me, allow it. At all events, consulting or considering all the ancient Liturgies,—both those of the Catholic Church, and those of the Churches disunited from her,—you will be candid enough to own this:—that, in the first place, there is nothing to be traced in any one of these instruments, on the subject of the Eucharist, that accords with your Protestant doctrines:—secondly, that the assertions of your writers, who pretend that our doctrine of the mystery is a modern innovation of the Church of Rome, are the dictates, as I have said before, of the basest design to impose upon the ignorance and credulity of the public; or else, the effect of the grossest ignorance in those deceivers. "*If the cause of the Protestants and Catholics,*" says Faustus Socinus, *concerning Transubstantiation, were to be decided by the authority of the Fathers, the former, in such case, must necessarily own themselves vanquished.*" The Magdeburg Centuriators assert the same. "*Saint Gregory of Nyssa,*" for example, they say, "*St. Chrysostom, St. John Damascen, the venerable Bede, all, maintained the doctrine of Transubstantiation.*"

Thus, then, my Lord,—as I did on the subject of the *real presence*,—I have presented to your consideration a few, both of those plain Scriptural proofs, and of those historical documents, which evince and certify the truth of our doctrine of Transubstantiation. May they only convey to your mind, as I hope they will do, those convictions which you are seeking to attain. At all events, they cannot fail but make you sensible of this, that our doctrine is very clearly expressed in the texts

of the holy Scriptures, very forcibly confirmed by your own rules of biblical interpretation, and supported by all the best sanctions, and authorities, of the best, and brightest, ages of the Christian Church. They will too,—when you reflect upon them seriously,—compel you to look back with pain, if not with remorse, upon those oaths,—those frightful oaths,—which, in your capacities of a senator, and a magistrate, you have, more than once, incautiously taken, in reference to the mystery,—declaring before God, as you have done, that *our* worship of it is "*Idolatry;*" and that myself, of course, as well as all other Catholics, are so many benighted and lost Idolaters!! May heaven forgive you the unchristian and unkind appeal!*

* The oaths of our Protestant Legislators, &c., are monuments of bigotry, and illiberality; such as exist no where *now*, but in this country;—the disgrace of an enlightened nation, and the scandal of a Christian one. Invented by a man,—"*a name*," as Dryden says, "*to all succeeding ages curst;*"—composed by malevolence, fanaticism, and political animosity, they were forced upon the nation, during an epoch of religious madness and persecution. They are made up of imputations and principles, the most ungenerous and unjust. *Uncharitable;*—for what can be more uncharitable, than to swear, that the far largest portion of the Christian world (for, such are the believers in Transubstantiation) are a miserable body of damnable idolaters? *Rash;*—for, before any one can, with safety, appeal to the Divine veracity, he ought essentially to be sure, or at least, very prudently convinced, of the certainty of the fact, or of the truth of the proposition, which he thus solemnly avers. And yet, where is the senator, or the magistrate, who possesses even the slenderest knowledge of our real doctrine of Transubstantiation? Swearing boldly, that our worship of the mystery is an act of idolatry, they, with hardly an exception, know just as much about the matter, as do the children of the Universities, who, at the ages of twelve or fourteen, are compelled to swear that they believe in the Thirty-nine Articles, which yet, they have never, for the most part, so much as read; but which, most certainly, they do not understand. *Needless;*—for, what has either the disbelief, or the belief, in Transubstantiation to do with the functions of a legislator, or the duties of a magistrate? *False;*—for, so far are we from adoring, as the oaths imply we do, the elements of bread and wine,—we, on the contrary, believe, that there is neither bread nor wine existing in the mystery. Our adoration is addressed solely, and entirely, to the divine person of Jesus Christ. *Inconsistent;*—for, if Christ is "*Verily, and indeed*" present in the Sacrament, as your Creed declares he is,—why, in this case condemn us as idolaters for adoring Him? Considering these, and many other similar circumstances, it is indeed astonishing, how men, who admit

XII. But, I come now to the consideration of those chief objections, which your Lordship has proposed to me, respecting our doctrine of Transubstantiation. They are objections, indeed, which, although every where common amongst you Protestants, are founded, not at all upon the principles of Christian faith, but upon dictates of human reason; not, as true piety ordains, upon the basis of humility, but upon the suggestions of proud, and profane, philosophy. They are founded upon the alleged nature, and properties, of the mystery itself; its incomprehensibility; its opposition to the testimony of the senses; its wonderful and stupendous character, &c. Such are your principal difficulties; and it is chiefly upon the score of these that you hesitate, you tell me, to acknowledge the *whole* truth of our religion.

"*The mystery,*" you say, "*is incomprehensible.*" This, my Lord, I willingly admit. But, surely, you cannot, *as a Christian,* pretend, with any thing like consistency, either to reject it, or so much as to object to it, on the presumed force of this objection. For, the case is, that, not only is the mystery of Transubstantiation incomprehensible, but such also is the nature of all the mysterious doctrines of revelation. They are, all of them, incomprehensible. And it is this precisely,—this incomprehensibility,—that constitutes their essence, and that gives the merit to their belief. To disbelieve and reject any mystery upon the pretence that we do not comprehend it, would prove

the awful sanctity of oaths,—men of honour, piety, and religion,—can thus, without remorse or fear, declare solemnly before God, that our worship,—which yet they know nothing at all about,—our worship, which was that of the saints and sages of every age of the Christian Church,—is in reality no other than so much stupid and profane idolatry. Surely, before they thus venture with desperate courage to pronounce the dread appeal, they ought seriously to pause. And having once taken the dreadful oaths, they *must*, methinks,—if piously thoughtful,—not only experience uneasiness and pain, but *tremble* at the act of rashness.

It was but the other day, that the Edinburgh Reviewers, speaking of the multiplication of oaths in this country, and of their habitual profanation, made the following too true reflections:—"*Of all nations in the world, past or present, Pagan or Christian, the English is the one most infamous for the contempt of religious obligations: and if on any national wickedness the wrath of God is visited, we may soon have cause to lament with Jeremiah, that 'because of swearing, the land mourneth.'*"

equivalently, and in the order of consistency, the rejection of every mystery in religion.

"*The mystery is incomprehensible.*" True: but, is not such even the case with the very works of *nature* itself? For, are not many of these just alike inexplicable as it is? They are indeed such, that no science, however profound, can penetrate them; no individual, however enlightened, and gigantic his mind, can so much as conceive them. "*Nature,*" says Bayle, "*is an abyss, which no human mind can fathom. Its springs are known only to Him, who has formed and directs them. I am sure, that no philosopher will deny, or contest this. The essence of the most simple, ordinary, and inanimate objects, is buried in deep and impenetrable darkness.*"

"*The mystery is incomprehensible.*" Well, but is it not again the fact, my Lord, that, in the order of *nature* itself, nearly all its operations are conducted, and its effects produced, by the very process and power of *Transubstantiation?* Those constantly varying forms and developements, which we every where trace around us; those wonderful changes and metamorphoses which hourly take place, in ten thousand objects, are all the effects of Transubstantiation. Thus, the small gelatinous molecule is transformed into an active and beauteous being; the crawling worm, into a brilliant insect; the trifling seed, into a stately tree. It is the simple union of a little earth and water, that clothes our fields with verdure, loads our gardens with fruits, and in reality gives food to the whole creation. It is Transubstantiation that constitutes the source and basis of our very life, health, and vigour; converting, as it does, whatsoever we eat and digest, into blood, flesh, bones, &c. And again, how wonderful is that operation,—an operation pervading the whole order of animal beings,—by which, for the sake and support of their new-born progeny, the food of the female parent,—which until now had been turned into *blood*,—is now, at once, for the nourishment of their young, Transubstantiated into *milk*. These, and such as these, are among the numberless, endless, transmutations, which we may every instant see taking place throughout the whole spectacle of nature. But, if so,—if nature itself is thus full of incomprehensible changes,—why then, upon the pretext of the incomprehensibility

of that which occurs at our altars, why, upon this pretext, either reject it, or even hesitate to believe it? To the omnipotence of God, one form of change is alike easy as another: whilst seeing that the soul is so much more precious than the body, it is, hence, but reasonable to suppose, that, as in his mercy He performs such, and so many wonders for the benefit of the latter, so also he may, and *does* equally, perform them for the benefit and salvation of the former.*

"*The mystery is incomprehensible.*" In stating this objection, my Lord, you are not perhaps, aware, that you appeal to an argument, which militates equally,—or rather far more,—against the doctrine of your own Church, respecting the holy institution, than against ours. For, after all, great and incomprehensible as is the mystery of Transubstantiation, yet it is easy to conceive, that, if Christ Jesus do so will it, he can, by virtue of his infinite power, without any difficulty convert the substance of bread and wine into the substance of his own flesh and blood. To conceive this is easy. But, to conceive the truth, or comprehend the wisdom of the doctrine of your Church repecting the mystery, this, to my apprehensions, appears impossible. Dryden, who had studied it with assiduous care, declares it a system of downright "*nonsense.*" Even your learned Bishop, Poynet, speaking of the *methods* in which many of your divines have undertaken to explain the mystery, allows them to be "*unaccountable and unintelligible.*" In fact, there is no wonder that they are so. For example, your Church teaches, that the Eucharist "*is* VERILY, AND INDEED, *the flesh and blood of*

* "*It requires,*" says Mr. Fairholm, "*but a glance around us to perceive, that, by the laws, to which all things have been submitted by the Almighty,—to which we generally give the unmeaning name of "The Laws of Nature"—matter is constantly assuming a different form. The stately oak moulders into dust, and becomes food for the plants. The ox changes grass into flesh. His flesh passes, at his death, into other beings, who, in their turn, undergo the same metamorphose. All created beings move, without ceasing, from one form to another. Man himself, being laid in the earth, fertilises the soil. His flesh becomes food for plants, which are eaten by animals, which man, in his turn, devours. His Creator has announced to him this great truth,—'For, dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.' Even the most solid portions of the mineral world are not exempted from these general laws.*" (Geology of the Scrip.)

Christ." And yet, it teaches at the same time that it is still "*verily, and indeed*," a substantial, and unchanged, portion of bread and wine. It admits a real presence, united with a real absence. It admits a real presence, but it admits no way of accounting for such presence,—neither *impanation*, nor *companation*,—nor, of course, Transubstantiation. It neither interprets the words of Christ *literally*, nor *figuratively*; nor, according to its own rules, "*grammatically*." In short, it converts the sacred institution into a complete *riddle*. Whence, I am not surprised at the severe sentence of Dryden, denominating it a piece of "*nonsense*."

In order to point out to your Lordship the incomprehensibility of your Church's doctrine, and to show you how strangely it is explained by multitudes even of its modern clergy,—I could easily cite many striking examples from their works,—and from the works of some of its most learned theologians. In these, if you think proper to consult them, you will find exactly verified that reproach of Bishop Poynet to the clergy in his time, that their methods of explaining the Sacrament *are* "*unaccountable and unintelligible*." But, by the way of illustrating this seemingly harsh imputation, I will just cite one specimen, or example of them; an example, too, not borrowed from the works of an obscure or unlearned writer, but from those of a prelate, who, besides being celebrated for his learning, was deemed, moreover, the very model of Protestant orthodoxy: I allude to the late Bishop of Durham,—the pious, and ardently zealous, Dr. Barrington. Let me, however, before I cite the proposed example, just remind you,—in order that you may feel the thing more sensibly,—to bear in your remembrance the *definition* of the mystery, as it is expressed in the most authentic instruments of your Church. In these, as you have seen, the doctrine of the real presence is laid down, and stated, in the plainest terms,—in terms just equally plain as ours,—in fact, in the very language of the Council of Trent.* In the Communion Service, which once was drawn up by Cranmer, Ridley,

* Many Protestant writers, comparing the doctrine of the Established Church,—*as it is expressed in its best instruments of faith*,—with the doctrine of the Catholic Church, have declared that they can discover no difference between them. "*It must be owned*," says Cox, in his Life of

and other learned divines, it was there inculcated to the public as an important and pious instruction, that "*The whole body of Christ is received under each particle of the Sacrament.*" Such as these, my Lord, are the *official* and authentic declarations of your Church respecting the mystery, which I wish you to retain, in order that you may the better feel the strange, —"*the unaccountable and unintelligible*"—manner, in which the learned and enlightened portions of your divines are now pleased to describe, and explain its nature. Wherefore, to the example just alluded to in the works of Bishop Barrington.

The good prelate, you perhaps remember, excited by the tenderness of his pastoral solicitude for the salvation of his flock,—as well also as for that of the public,—addressed, a few years ago, in sundry charges, a variety of instructions to his clergy concerning the Eucharist. In these, after having very devoutly abused our Catholic doctrine, and well nigh preached a holy crusade against our persons, he proceeds, by way of enlightening and edifying his readers, to present to them a plain orthodox, and lucid explanation of the doctrine of the Established Church, concerning the sacred institution. For this purpose, and as the ground of his elucidations, he selects those striking words of our Saviour:—"*My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.*" No passage could have been better selected for the pious design than this: for, no words can be more simple and expressive. However, so it is. Of these simple and expressive

Melancthon, "*that it would require good spectacles to discern any very essential difference between them.*"

"*For the life of us,*" says another acute writer, "*we cannot attach any other than a real and corporal interpretation to the following interrogatories of the Catechism:—Question: "What is the inward part, or thing, signified?" Answer: "The body and blood of Christ, which are verily, and indeed, taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." If this is not Transubstantiation, we do not know how it can be otherwise expressed.*"

Such too as this is the opinion stated but the other day by the learned and candid prebendary, Dennis. He, therefore, recommends in his address the revision of the Liturgy:—"*Because,*" he says, "*both its present Catechism, and its Communion Service, contain Transubstantiation.*"

words, the learned Prelate, in the effusions of his piety and wisdom, is pleased to give *five* different, and very luminous, interpretations. I shall cite these, as they are stated in the eloquent Tracts of Dr. Lingard, presenting at the same time, but abridging, the observations of that learned writer upon them.

The first explanation:—"*To eat Christ,*" says the Bishop,—and in these words he comprises the meaning of the various passages and texts which relate to the Sacrament,—"*To eat Christ, is to incorporate with the mind the spiritual food of faith and righteousness.*" This, observes Dr. Lingard, is a hard saying. For, although the idea of *incorporating* with the *mind* the food of faith may be perspicuous to an orthodox mind, to mine it is an unknown tongue.

The second explanation:—"*To eat Christ, is to imbibe his doctrines, to digest his precepts, and to live by his example.*" In this explanation there is comprised the mental incorporation just cited; that is, drinking doctrines, digesting precepts, and living by example.

The third explanation:—"*We eat Christ, by having Him in our minds, and meditating on his life and sufferings.*" This is, surely, a very harsh, and unnatural, form of expression. For, to say we eat the flesh, and drink the blood, of Christ, by thinking on his life and sufferings, is a kind of metaphor as extravagant as any thing that can be met with in the style of Oriental literature.

The fourth explanation:—"*To eat Christ, is to believe in Him. And to eat his flesh, is to keep up the remembrance of Him—especially of his death.*" This is only an extension of the limits of the preceding explanation; and, to me, just equally unintelligible.

The fifth explanation,—which is also the winding up, and conclusion of the whole:—"*To eat the body of Christ, therefore, and to drink His blood, at the Sacrament, are figurative terms, to denote an act of faith, by which we profess our faith in Christ, and commemorate his death, by eating the representative, and vicarious, elements of bread and wine.*"

Such, my Lord, are the explanations of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which a prelate eminent for his learning, and pre-eminent for his orthodoxy, presents to his clergy, and to the

public, by the way of *instruction;* proposing thus to enlighten their ignorance, and to enliven the dulness of their devotion. Whether they may have produced either of these effects in your Lordship, or whether, with all your talents, you have been so fortunate as to understand them, I do not pretend to know. Only, if you do understand them, or if any individual understand them, I will then say, that both yourself, and such enlightened personage, are blessed with a share of penetration, to which I have no pretension. If, indeed, they do contain any real meaning,—to me, it appears to be this,—that, as the Eucharist is but "*a representative, and vicarious*" thing, so it is, consequently, neither more nor less than the bare, simple, and unsubstantial, figure of Zuinglius;—its alleged mystery, therefore, no real mystery at all; the Sacrament, but an imposing name; and the Communion, but a pious ceremony. If such is not the import, and the upshot, of the good Bishop's language, let sagacity, more acute than mine, undertake to show what is. But, at all events, what a strange elucidation of an institution, which, in the eyes of faith, and to the feelings of piety, is, beyond any other, the most interesting in the whole Christian dispensation! However, the thing is not, after all, surprising; neither is the pious prelate, with all his strange, and unintelligible, explanations, either alone, or singular. For, in nearly all those which we daily meet with in the writings of your clergy, we find little else than ambiguity, paradox, and equivocation. Whence, also, it has been always my opinion, that, amongst the many pious, excellent, and well-meaning individuals, who frequent your Communion Tables, there are few indeed, if any, who carry with them there any exact, well-formed, and distinct ideas, respecting the real nature of the Sacrament, which it is their design, and their wish, to venerate.

Your Lordship has not stated to me in your letter, what may be the precise nature of your *own* belief respecting the Sacrament. If, however, I were allowed to conjecture what it is, I should suspect, and fear, from the character of your objections, and from your acknowledged repugnance to the admission of mysteries, that you, like Dr. Barrington, considering the Eucharist as but "*a vicarious and representative*" thing, regard, and respect it, therefore, only as a pious *figure*. If, my Lord,

such are indeed your notions of the Holy Institution, allow me, in this case, to intreat you to pause seriously over so dangerous an opinion ;—an opinion, alike repugnant, as I have shown you, to the positive assurances of Christ ; to the language of the Scriptures ; to the authority of the best ages of the Church ; and even to the *genuine* doctrine of your own Establishment. You cannot, with your good sense, help feeling,—and your candour will, perhaps, allow,—that if the declarations of Christ, instituting the Sacrament, were designed to convey, or do convey, no other than a figurative signification, it is truly in this case astonishing, that, during the long course *of fifteen hundred years*, such signification should never have been discovered ; never have been even conjectured by all the talents, wisdom, and learning, of those ages ; never have been so much as thought on, until Zuinglius, instructed by his "*black or white*" monitor, came forward to reveal it. But, can you really believe, or imagine, that, if the Eucharist is no other, or little else, than a pious figure, the secret could possibly have remained so long concealed ? And can you, in like manner, conceive, that the secret,—if it were communicated so late, *or at all*,—would have been communicated through the medium of a man, who was, acknowledgedly, tutored by the lessons of the "Prince of darkness ?"

I know, that, by way of defence, or as an illustration of the justness of the figurative sense, your Lordship may, perhaps, cite,—as your divines adduce for ever,—certain expressions of our Saviour, which, they contend, are parallel, and similar, to those which He made use of on the occasion of the Last Supper. Such are the expressions, or sentences,—"*I am the door.—I am the vine*," and so on. But surely, my Lord, all this is very feeble, and wretched reasoning. For, the truth is,—these expressions are manifestly plain, ordinary, and obvious, figures of speech, which nobody can misunderstand. If, indeed, He had said :—"*I am* THIS *door ; I am* THIS *vine*,"—for these are the expressions parallel and similar to the expressions, "THIS *is My body ;* THIS *is My blood ;*—if he had spoken so, then there might have been some little room at least for sophistry to dispute and cavil, although no one could have understood the

extraordinary and extravagant metaphors. Strange, indeed, is the mode of reasoning, that because Christ did, on some occasions, make use of figures, He, therefore, used them, at his Last Supper,—the very occasion when he should not have used them, and the very time, as I have remarked before, when, beyond any other, he ought to have spoken,—*as he did speak*,—most plainly, and without the slenderest shadow of any figure. Thus it is that your neologists, and modern unbelievers, torturing the Holy Scriptures, and twisting the clearest texts and passages into metaphors, parables, hyperboles, and figures, are reasoning away all the mysteries of religion. It is thus that the Socinian, the Unitarian, &c.—" wresting the Sacred Volume to their own destruction,"—have converted into figurative meanings all the texts, however plain, which relate to the most essential Christian mysteries,—the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Original Sin, &c. But to proceed with your objections.

XIII. " *The mystery*," you go on to say, " *is repugnant to the testimony of the senses.*" Well, my Lord,—and let me observe:—How many beings, and objects, do there not, every where, exist,—and which we know exist,—of whose existence, nevertheless, we have neither any proof, nor any attestation, from the *senses?* We admit, for example, the existence of a multitude of spiritual beings—the angelic hosts, the soul, the divinity itself,—substances which no eye has seen, nor any sense reported. We believe, and know, the existence of a world of physical objects,—animal, mineral, and vegetable,—in which there are concealed properties, qualities, &c., so secret, that neither any art can discover, nor any science comprehend them. Why, even in the order of insects,—a class of well-organised and perfect animals,—there are millions of these every where around us, so minute, as to be invisible to the sharpest eye, and undistinguishable to all the senses. " *The mind is lost in wonder*," adds the learned writer, just quoted in the preceding note, " *and is incapable of conceiving what no tongue can express,—that there are in almost all fluids animals, as perfect as ourselves in bodily structure and action, so minute, that it would require millions of them to form the compass of one*

single grain of sand." * With the consideration of these wonders present to your mind, you cannot, my Lord, be surprised, that religion also should have *its* wonders: neither can you reasonably infer, that, because an object is invisible to the eye, or imperceptible to the senses, it does not, therefore, exist. "*Miraculousness,*" says Sharon Turner, "*is the true character of* CREATED *nature.*" But, if so, how much more appropriately still is it the true character of UNCREATED religion?

"*The mystery is repugnant to the testimony of the senses.*" This, my Lord, is a vulgar, and unfortunate, error. Transubstantiation is not repugnant to the testimony of the senses; neither do our senses deceive us at all in its regard. On the contrary, we believe the testimony of our senses. We believe, that all the outward forms and appearances of the Sacrament, —for these are all that the *senses* can pretend to judge of,—are such precisely as we perceive them. If we contended that Transubstantiation is a visible, or sensible, change, then it is true, we should, in such case, contradict the report of our senses. But we do not maintain, nor believe this. We believe exactly the reverse. We believe that it is not a visible and sensible change, but an *invisible and insensible one;* and consequently, that, as our *senses* are not the judges of invisible and insensible objects, so, of course, our senses do not deceive us. But, what then is the fact? Why, we believe, that it is not the *exterior* forms and qualities of the bread and wine, that are changed in the divine mystery, but their *substance.* Now who, or what philosopher, can even pretend to deny this? For who, or what philosopher, can pretend either to understand the nature of substance, or even to know what substance is? "*The substance*

* The same author tells us, that "*he had lately the opportunity of demonstrating in the most unequivocal manner, that it would require from one to three millions of some active animalcula to form the bulk of one single grain of sand.*" There are in the works of Dr. Roget, Professors Grant, Ehrenberg, &c., many similar, if not even more striking, examples of the wonders of nature, than the above. Well does Sir Humphry Davy say:—"*We cannot embrace the millionth part of the objects surrounding us. And yet we have the presumption to reason upon the infinite universe, and the Eternal Mind by which it was created, and is governed. On these subjects I have no confidence in reason. I trust only to* FAITH. *And as far as we ought to inquire, we have no other guide but* REVELATION."

of bodies," says Locke, "*is entirely unknown to us.*" Newton says the same:—"*Intimas corporum substantias, nullo sensu, nullâ actione reflexâ, cognoscimus.*" What alone we can pretend, or should presume to reason upon, in regard of substance, is little or nothing more than its surface,—the outward forms and accidents which clothe it. And why, therefore,—seeing that God is the author both of the substance, and of its outward forms and accidents,—why refuse to believe, that if He so will it, He has not the power to change the *internal substance* of any body, and still leave the *external* forms? Or why not just as easily believe, that, by the omnipotence of his *word*, he can convert the substance of bread into the substance of his flesh, as by virtue of that *same word* he performed so many other striking miracles;—changing water into wine at Cana; raising the dead to life; giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf; curing maladies, &c.? To refuse to believe this, or to contest it, would be equivalently the denial of his Divine power. Hence, therefore, the error of your Lordship: you mistake the *external* forms and accidents of substance for the substance itself. And such also is, unhappily, the common error of nearly all you Protestants.* Whereas, the fact is,—the former are

* "*It is*," says the Bishop of Durham, Dr. Van Mildert, in his Bampton Lectures,—"*it is because Transubstantiation is repugnant to the senses, that it is rejected by Protestants.*" Now, although it may be more or less true,—in relation to ordinary cases, and to the general objects which surround us,—that we may commonly judge of them, and of their reality, by the testimony of the senses,—yet, to assert that their testimony should always be admitted, or even consulted, in extraordinary cases, and in regard to the mysteries of religion;—this is, indeed, neither the dictate of Christian theology, nor the principle of wise philosophy. It was precisely by this very argument that the Jews were induced to reject the divinity of our great Redeemer. "*Is not this, they said, the Carpenter's son?*" They judged of Him by the testimony of their senses; and accordingly, they, for this very reason, refused to believe in Him.

And how many examples are there not in the Scriptures, in which, by the appointment of God, the senses of his servants were deceived? We see there, that on many occasions, the angels,—bodiless beings,—appeared in the shape of solid human bodies,—of men, in all the forms and attitudes of earthly creatures;—in the case, for instance, of Abraham, eating and drinking with him; in the case of Jacob, wrestling with him, &c. The report, therefore, of the senses is not always, nor on extraordinary occa-

merely the veils which shroud and conceal the latter. So that what we believe respecting the mystery is, that, by virtue of the Divine power, and by a miracle, imperceptible to our senses, the *substance* of bread and wine is, in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, converted into the *substance* of the flesh and blood of Christ;—the external surface, meanwhile, as a veil, or curtain, concealing the Eternal Being from our sight. It was thus, that, in the mystery of the incarnation, the divinity of this same sacred personage was concealed, and hid, beneath the veil, or curtain, of his flesh. It was from these considerations, and from the better knowledge of our doctrines, that Mr. Hallam has, in his candour, been induced to say,—"*The doctrine of Transubstantiation does not, as vulgarly supposed, contradict the evidence of the senses,—since our senses can report nothing as to the unknown being which the schoolmen denominate 'Substance:' and which* ALONE *was the subject of this conversion.*" (Const. Hist.)

After the above-stated objections, your Lordship still further urges, that "*the alleged mystery, besides being so incomprehensible, and repugnant to the senses, is, moreover, so transcendently wonderful, as to appear quite incredible. For, how imagine, or believe,*" you remark, "*that the great Lord of Heaven and earth should stoop so low, as to shroud his omnipotence; and under the humble form of a little portion of bread and wine, bestow His whole Self upon his creatures? Such miracle,*" you say, "*is, surely, too stupendous to be credible.*" Now, my Lord, allow me to observe, that this objection, although very common among you Protestants, and the unbelievers, is, at the same time, a very profane, and unchristian one. It implies the bold presumption of pretending to measure the extent of God's omnipotence, and of prescribing

sions, nor in the order of religion, the principle by which we ought to judge of the dispensations of God's infinite wisdom, or of the institutions of his Almighty power.

In fact, even in the order of nature itself, to pretend to judge of a variety of objects by the report of the senses would be not only a source of mistakes and errors, but an absurdity. There is not one single sense,—neither sight, hearing, taste, touch,—but what often, or rather constantly, misleads, and deceives us.

laws to the infinitude of his mercy. Mercy, beyond every other quality, is the favourite attribute of the Divine Being: and He has even done more to display this in the order of *religion*, than He has done, in the works of *nature*, to manifest his greatness. The whole system of religion is a system of mercy, and love, for man. The consequence, therefore, is, that the circumstance of Transubstantiation appearing,—or being,—so peculiarly wonderful,—so far from being an additional motive for its disbelief,—is, on the contrary, in the eyes of Christian piety and wisdom, an additional reason for its admission, and the very principle which ought to awaken in our hearts a higher veneration for such blessing. It is the very stamp of its divinity; and the broad, deep, seal, impressed upon it by the hand of the Almighty. It is God alone, that could have conceived and invented so astonishing an institution;—He alone, that, with any thing like confidence, could have proposed it as a certain truth; He alone, that, with the slenderest chance or prospect of success, could have at once engaged a corrupted and unbelieving world, not only to believe and adopt it, without murmur or hesitation, but even to cherish it, as the best source of their consolations, and the main object of their worship.

I will just remark here to your Lordship the effects of habit and education. You easily believe, and sincerely revere,—and so also do the public,—the *mystery* of the *Incarnation*. Well, think now only upon the nature of this sacred dispensation,—the subject of everlasting wonder to angels, and to men. You thus believe that the divinity itself,—the great King of Heaven, and the Creator and Lord of all things,—"*took upon Himself the form of a* SERVANT;" and in that mean and humble shape, suffered himself to be insulted, despised, and oppressed; to endure every kind of indignity and injustice; and, ere long, to be condemned to a cruel and ignominious death. You believe, that this eternal and infinite Being,—He, whose immensity is boundless,—whose centre is every where, and whose circumference no where,—was thus shut up, and confined, within the narrow compass of a human body. Now, I ask your Lordship, is not all this alike wonderful, and incomprehensible;—alike repugnant to the senses, as is the mystery of Transubstantiation? The Divine Being, you thus own, humbles Himself to the very lowest state of

degradation, and infinitude is reduced to the contracted measure of a trifling span. Hence, then, believing this, as you happily, and willingly do, — and as the whole Christian world does equally,—is it not surprising, and inconsistent, that you should object so forcibly to the doctrine of Transubstantiation? What, then, is the cause, or reason, of the discrepancy? Or why admit one mystery, and reject the other? The real reason is this:— education, habit, prejudice, and insult, have *not* armed you, and the public, against the belief of the *Incarnation:* whilst all those principles,—education, habit, all the arts and artifices of injustice, insult, ridicule, and misrepresentation,—*have* armed you against the belief of *Transubstantiation.* For, comparing both mysteries together, the Incarnation is, of the two, the most stupendous and inconceiveable. It is more difficult to conceive and imagine, how the great Lord of heaven and earth should subject Himself to all the miseries of human nature, and confine his infinitude within the limits of a mortal body, than that (this same body being now glorified, immortal, and impassable) he should bestow himself upon us, under the pleasing and significant form of earthly food. To reject *Transubstantiation,* therefore, on the pretext that it is too wonderful to be credible, and yet admit the *Incarnation,* which is still more wonderful, is, in fact, a piece of inconsistency. Making, indeed, the supposition,—as I have done before,—that our Divine Redeemer did, in his mercy and wisdom, design to give us his sacred flesh, in order to nourish our souls with his heavenly graces; to perpetuate the remembrance of his death; to excite in our hearts the feelings of love; and to exercise the obedience of our faith; supposing this, it is impossible to imagine any other form more perfectly adapted to all these purposes, than that which he has assumed in this adorable institution. He thus,—which is the great end and aim of religion,—unites us to Himself, "abiding in us, and we in Him;" He places before our minds the tragedy of his sufferings; by his amiable condescension, veiling the splendours of his greatness, He renders Himself accessible to us,—awakening our confidence, and inspiring those sentiments of St. Austin,—"*The lower He stoops, the more I love Him:*" whilst, moreover, by the greatness of the mystery, He presents to us the occasion of prac-

tising the humility of faith, and the virtue of submission. Wherefore, since the veil, which He has thus assumed, is, beyond every other, the best suited to our circumstances and situation here,—and as, to His omnipotence, it is alike easy to bestow His blessed flesh upon us, under whatsoever form He chooses,—so, I infer, it is but reasonable to believe, that it is *under the alleged form*—according to His own clear and express assurances,—that He communicates to us His unspeakable and heavenly benefits.

I cannot, of course, pretend to say, how far the arguments and reflections, which I have thus presented to your Lordship's consideration, may have contributed, either to reconcile you to the belief of our doctrine, or to lessen your incredulity in its regard. I will flatter myself, indeed, that the former is,—or at least will be, ere long,—the happy result of your pious meditations. But, at all events, the arguments and reflections, which I have suggested, cannot have failed to convince you of the indecency of those writers and preachers of yours, who, because their little, brief capacities are unable to comprehend the divine mystery, and unwilling to ascertain its truth, treat it, therefore, as "an impossibility, a contradiction, an absurdity,"—"*blasphemantes, quod ignorant.*" As if, deluded men, they had measured the length and breadth of God's omnipotence, or knew the precise extent of his wisdom, and his mercy. As if they had wings to soar up to his eternal tabernacles, or eyes to penetrate into the deep abysses of his counsels,—they, poor, puny things! who are incapable of understanding even the most simple objects of nature, and who know absolutely nothing respecting the substance, the essence, the interior mechanism, and construction, of any body whatsoever. The truth is, that, did these men only reason, and act consistently, they would, by the very same process of argumentation, which they employ against the mystery of Transubstantiation, reject half,—if not all,—the mysteries of revelation. For these are just as incomprehensible to their reason, and as impervious to their senses, as is that sacred institution. The Protestant, it is indeed certain, believes too much, and too little;—*too much*, if he follow the dictates of *human reason;—too little*, if he consult the injunctions of *Christian faith.*

XIV. In the early part of this letter, describing the character of the mysteries of religion, and pointing out the method of ascertaining the certainty of their revelation, I observed to your Lordship, that the proper means of doing this, or of judging of the truth of these divine objects, is not by consulting the dictates of our reason, the suggestions of proud philosophy, nor the report and testimony of the senses. I stated, at the same time, the reason for these restrictions. It is, I remarked, because the mysteries of religion are objects placed beyond the pale of created things, and out of the circle of the senses,—divine *secrets*, whose properties, therefore, man can neither comprehend in this life, nor, with prudence, attempt to penetrate. The whole, and the only proof which we do,—and can,—possess here, (and I showed you this, upon the authority of your own divines) of the truth and certainty of any mysterious doctrine, is simply the *fact* of its revelation, and the evidence of the *testimony* that God has really delivered it to us. It is this alone,—this *fact and testimony*,—that, as Christians, we ought to investigate, or can investigate consistently: because it is only this that we can pretend to understand. "*Faith comes*," says St. Paul, "*from the* HEARING. *It is the substance of things* NOT SEEN." So that the consequence thus is, that the circumstance of any mysterious doctrine being more or less wonderful, or more or less obscure and incomprehensible, is, in the eyes of the enlightened Christian, completely immaterial;—a subject neither of doubt, perplexity, nor surprise. All that he looks to, or regards, is the *fact, or testimony*, that God has spoken, and revealed it. This, once ascertained, he is satisfied. He then, like St. Peter, humbly bowing down his reason in calm submission, exclaims:—"*Lord, thou hast the words of eternal life; and I believe.*"

Accordingly, it was by adopting, and following up, these maxims, that your Lordship ought to have proceeded,—or if you have not already done so, should proceed,—in your study and investigations of our doctrine of Transubstantiation. This, besides being the only Christian and consistent method of examining the vital question, is moreover, as I have just said, the process recommended by the authority of your own most learned theologians. Thus, Dr. Faber,—although the bitterest enemy

of our religion,—says,—"*The doctrine of Transubstantiation, like the doctrine of the Trinity, is a question, not of abstract reasoning, but of pure* EVIDENCE. *We believe the revelation of God to be essential and unerring truth. Our business, most plainly, is, not to discuss the abstract absurdity, and the imagined contradictoriness of Transubstantiation, but to inquire, according to the best means we possess, whether it be indeed a doctrine of Holy Scripture. If sufficient evidence shall determine such to be the case, we may be sure that the doctrine is neither absurd, nor contradictory. I shall ever contend, that the doctrine of Transubstantiation, like the doctrine of the Trinity, is a question of* PURE EVIDENCE." These principles and sentiments are alike the suggestions of good sense, as they are the dictates of sound theology. Happy would it be for the cause of Catholicity, if they were only acted upon and followed. Their observance would furnish very easy triumphs to our religion. Be it then yours, my Lord, to adopt them; and under their guidance and direction,—not now any longer as a philosopher pretending to measure the height and depth of God's omnipotence—not daringly attempting to draw aside the veil which He has hung before his sanctuary,—investigate only the *evidences and the testimony* which establish the *fact* of the revelation of the mystery. Conducted by these safe and enlightened guides, you will early be reduced, if not to acknowledge, at all events to feel, that, among all the mysterious doctrines of the Christian code, there is not any one that is better attested, or more manifestly revealed, than it is: and you will, with me, condemn both the inconsistency and the profaneness of your writers, who every where, and every day, denounce it to the ignorant and benighted public, as "an absurdity, an impossibility, &c."* I have, indeed, this confidence in your Lord-

* Speaking of the unbecoming language of these men, the learned writer, above quoted, says:—"*While arguing upon this subject,*" (Transubstantiation,) "*some persons, I regret to say, have been too copious in the use of those unseemly words, 'absurdity, and impossibility.' To such language the least objection is, its reprehensible want of good manners. A much more serious objection is, the tone of presumptuous loftiness which pervades it, and is wholly unbecoming a creature of very narrow faculties. Certainly, God* WILL *do nothing absurd, and* CAN *do nothing impossible. But it does not, therefore,*

ship's piety and candour, that, provided you suffer yourself to be conducted by these guides, your objections,—if you still have any,—will soon be hushed, and your perplexities be done away. Alas! if truth were to give way to a few objections, and evidence to be sacrificed to difficulties, because we are unable to comprehend them,—if this were the case,—tell me what truth or mystery of religion—nay, what truth, or mystery of nature itself, would men believe? for the book of nature, like that of religion, is full of incomprehensibilities. Our objections, therefore, and our perplexities, are the effects of our present weakness, ignorance, and pride. We see things now through clouds, obscurely: but, ere long, these clouds will vanish and disappear. Then,—provided only that we have been humble and obedient,—then, plunged in the great ocean of light, we shall behold both the mysteries of religion, and the wonders of nature, in all their brightness and beauty. There is, even in this life, a satisfaction in the docility of the piously believing Christian, that is far more delightful and soothing to the heart than all the learned pride of the philosopher, who, labouring to know every thing, is for ever doubting and perplexed; and therefore, also, for ever restless and uneasy.

If, however, it do unfortunately so chance, that the arguments, which I have been suggesting, have not sufficed to reconcile your Lordship to our belief in the mystery, and to remove your perplexities and misgivings in its regard,—let me, in this case, recommend to your consideration the conduct, once, of the celebrated Pelisson,—a convert from Protestantism to the Catholic religion. He tells us, that, when pressed by the

follow, that OUR *view of things should be always perfectly correct, and free from misapprehension. Contradictions* WE *may easily fancy, where, in truth, there* ARE *none. Hence, therefore, before we pronounce any doctrine a contradiction, we must be sure we perfectly understand the nature of the matter propounded in that doctrine: for, otherwise, the contradiction may not be* IN THE MATTER ITSELF, *but* IN OUR MODE *of conceiving it. In regard of myself,—as my consciously finite intellect claims not to be an universal measure of congruities and possibilities,—I deem it to be both more wise, and more decorous, to refrain from assailing the doctrine of Transubstantiation, on the ground of its alleged absurdity, or contradictoriness, or impossibility. By such a mode of attack, we, in reality, quit the field of rational and satisfactory argumentation."* (Difficulties of Rom.)

acute and learned Aubertin, concerning the very question which now forms the chief source of your hesitations, he was wont, on those occasions, to cast up his eyes towards Heaven, to reflect upon the infinite greatness of God, and to consider his own littleness. "And at once," he adds, "all my doubts and apprehensions vanished. *I found God so* GREAT, *and myself so* LITTLE, *that I even wondered how any doubt could possibly have ever entered into my mind.*" Do you then, my Lord, imitate the conduct of this great man, making, like him, the same Christian and wise reflections. The effect will be,—or, at least, I will so flatter myself,—that, with those reflections present to your mind, and well impressed upon your feelings, you will experience no more difficulty in believing our doctrine of Transubstantiation, than you do in admitting any other mystery of the Christian revelation.

XV. After the statement of the difficulties which your Lordship experiences respecting our doctrine of the Eucharist, and your request to me to offer you some explanation of them, you still further tell me, that, being now sensible of the importance of salvation, you are, therefore, anxious to know the true faith, and to find out the *true* Church of Christ. Hence you, moreover, desire me to suggest to you some instructions likewise upon these important subjects. As your mind, you say, is neither satisfied with your own Church, nor, as yet, reconciled to ours, so, in this state of suspense, you are restless and distressed. These sentiments, my Lord, are worthy of *you*. And they are alike the dictates of reason, as they are the suggestions of Christian wisdom. For, to know the true faith, and to be a member of the true Church of Christ, is not only a duty, but the strict obligation imposed upon every individual. It is so much so, that the severest threatenings of God's displeasure, and the heaviest effects of his vengeance, are appended to the neglect and violation of the awful precept. Thus, our Saviour says,—"*He that believeth not, shall be* DAMNED. *He that will not hear the Church, shall be as the heathen and the publican.*" The cause of these severe injunctions is, that the true faith, and the true Church, are essentially, each of them, *divine;* and therefore also, each, essentially *one*. "*There is* ONE *Lord,*" says Christ

Jesus, "*and* ONE *faith. There is* ONE *fold, and* ONE *shepherd.*" The prospects and promises of salvation are, for these reasons, made by the Divine wisdom to depend upon the express condition of believing this "*one faith,*" and of belonging to this "*one fold.*"

These principles are, in fact, so incontestable, that they are not only admitted, but very forcibly inculcated, by your own Established Church. Thus, in the Athanasian Creed,—the authentic testimony, of itself, upon this subject,—it is declared, that "*the very first requisite*" for the security of salvation is the belief "*in the One true Catholic faith.*" And in order that this maxim may be the more deeply impressed upon the minds of the public,—or for fear lest they should not always carefully remember it,—your clergy,—the pastors, that is, of every congregation,—are strictly commanded by your canons to proclaim it loudly to them, at least fourteen times in the year. "*Whosoever,*" they solemnly call out, "*will be saved,* BEFORE ALL THINGS *it is* NECESSARY *to hold the true Catholic faith; which faith, except every one do keep* WHOLE, *and undefiled,* WITHOUT DOUBT *he shall perish everlastingly.*"

Hence then, my Lord, seeing thus that the hopes and prospects of salvation are directly attached to the belief of the true faith, it is, consequently, plain, that whosoever does not enjoy this blessing, is, in conscience, and in as much as he values his own future happiness, bound strictly to labour to make it his. Here his care and assiduity,—proportioned to the importance of the end,—should be earnest, and unremitting; biassed by no human respect; stayed by no worldly interest. "*Here,*" says Bishop Butler, "*inattention, negligence, the want of serious concern about the discovery, is as real a moral depravity, as the neglect of religious practice.*" (Analogy.) Here, indeed, any neglect is a real vice; and ignorance, a crime. For, where there is question of *salvation*, the means of attaining it can neither be neglected without guilt, nor omitted with impunity.

But, independently of the above considerations, your Lordship must also be aware, that it is peculiarly the duty of every Protestant,—*in order to be consistent*,—to endeavour seriously to find out the true faith. For, according to the very first rule, and the main principle, of Protestantism, the belief of the Pro-

testant ought necessarily to be founded upon the dictates of his own judgment, and the convictions of his own private conscience,—an effect which implies, of course, the process of study, comparison, and research. This, indeed, is the very essence of Protestantism, and the whole justification assigned by its first apostles, and best defenders, for their apostacy, or secession, from the parent Church. "*When the Protestants,*" says Archdeacon Blackburn, "*first withdrew from the communion of the Church of Rome, the principles they went upon were such as these:—'Jesus Christ has, by his Gospel, called all men unto liberty, and restored them to the privilege of working out their salvation by* THEIR OWN UNDERSTANDINGS AND ENDEAVOURS.'" "*The principle of the Reformation,*" adds Bishop Warburton, "*was that Christian liberty which gives every man the right to worship God, according to his own conscience.*" Whence, Bishop Tomline asserts, that "*it is the unalienable privilege of every Christian to form his own religious opinions.*"

As, therefore, it is thus both the duty, and the privilege, of every Protestant to judge for himself, and so form his religious creed, so also, in order to do this consistently, and with prudence, it cannot but appear proper, or rather necessary, that, ere he determine his belief, he should examine seriously, and impartially, the doctrines and the claims of his mother Church;—of that Church, which, far beyond any other, invites his consideration,—the school of the saints, and the nursery, but a few years past, of his own, and your Lordship's, ancestors;—a Church, venerable for its antiquity, undivided in its faith, magnificent, and boundless, in its diffusion. Surely, to study the doctrines, and consider the claims of a Church like this, ought to appear to every Protestant,—as it happily does to your Lordship,—an act of prudence, as it is in fact, even according to his own principles, an imperious *duty*.

I have made the observation already,—and it is, therefore, superfluous, perhaps, to repeat it,—that, although it is thus manifestly both the duty, and the obligation, of every prudent and consistent Protestant to examine the claims of our religion, yet it is a duty, and an obligation, which are almost wholly, and every where, neglected; and neglected equally by the learned,

as they are by the illiterate and the vulgar. I am sure of this,—that in the circles of my own Protestant acquaintance,—several of them clergymen, many of them men of talents and erudition,—I never met with so much *as one*, who appeared to me, (and I have often conversed with them on the subjects of religion,) even tolerably instructed in the real tenets of our Church. To account, indeed, for the ignorance of the *public*, concerning the doctrines of our religion, nothing is more obvious. For the public, every where, instead of giving themselves the trouble to study our doctrines, where alone they are stated accurately, do directly the reverse. They study, and read, and hear every kind of accusation against them, but not a line, nor word, in their defence. They read the books of a crowd of writers, and devour the sermons of a set of preachers, who, violating, alike, all the dictates of truth, the charities of moderation, and the decencies of honour and decorum, verify exactly that sentence of Tertullian, describing the character of the enemies of the Church, in his time:—"*Nihil illis interest, licet diversa tractantibus, dum ad unius veritatis expugnationem conspirent.*" Hence, therefore, that gross, and nearly universal ignorance, which pervades the public mind, in regard of our religion: and hence, also,—as the natural effect of this ignorance,—that heavy and disgusting mass of bigotry, prejudice, illiberality, ill-will, and injustice, towards both our religion, and its professors, which still disgrace the Protestantism of this country.*

* One of the most eloquent of the periodical writers, describing, the other day, the conduct and characters of the great Protestant body, which is now reviling our religion,—and which would be too happy again to persecute it,—says:—"*They do more than accumulate inflammatory materials,—they apply the torch. They rail, they insult, they vituperate, they denounce. The character, and the creed, of the Catholic, are perpetual themes, in their mouths, of rancorous declamation. They are as covetous of hatred, as other natures are of love. They lose no occasion of demonstrating to the people, that they are actuated by as fierce a spirit of intolerance, as ever drew sword, or kindled a fagot. Their language is the barking of the bloodhound. Now Popery, now the Papist, is the object of their rabid animosity.* POPERY *is 'idolatrous, blasphemous, profane, impious, abominable, damnable,' and whatever there is else of insulting epithet in the bigot's foul vocabulary. The* PAPIST *is 'a bigot; a creature steeped in crime, and superstition,' to be trampled upon like a slave, or exterminated like a wolf. This is the sum, and*

There are, indeed, besides the above causes, several others, which, withholding the public from the study of our religion, account also, more or less, for their ignorance of it. Men do not like to study a religion, which they do not like to practise. And ours is a religion, strict, rigid, and severe. They do not like to study a religion, whose profession, they conceive, would prove injurious to their worldly interests. The philosophy of this world is to provide, *first* for this life; afterwards, for the next. And ours is a religion, to which, until yesterday, all the avenues of honour and distinction, all the gates to wealth and opulence, were strictly closed and bolted. They do not like to study a religion, whose adoption, they are aware, would draw down upon them the persecution of their families, and the reproaches, and ill will, of their friends. And ours is a religion, whose adoption—they know it well,—would be sure to bring down all these effects upon them. For, let an individual,—however hitherto beloved, and cherished, become a Catholic, straight his family, and his friends,—such is the general bigotry, are in arms against him; always insulting, and by no means unfrequently abandoning him. In short, men do not like to study our religion, because, as our Saviour has said,—"*They love darkness better than the light.*" Thus are the reasons obvious, why the Protestant is so little acquainted with the truths, and character of our religion; and why, therefore, he entertains so many prejudices against it.*

But, as the foregoing observations do not relate at all to the

substance, of what they vociferate,—the pith, and marrow, of a thousand sermons, and a thousand speeches in church, conventicle, club, &c., in town and in country." The whole conduct, and language, of these men is, indeed, brutal, savage, and atrocious.

* It may be remarked, that exactly in proportion as the Protestants are acquainted with our religion,—so also, with hardly an exception, they respect, and esteem it; and all their hostility, and prejudices against it, completely melt away. Thus, it is the observation of Mr. Hallam, that, in the time of Charles the First, when its doctrines were still correctly known, and understood, by a considerable portion of the nation — "*Nothing excited so much alarm, as the perpetual conversions to the Catholic religion. They became the news of every day. Protestant clergymen, in several instances, but especially women of rank, became proselytes to that religion.*" He again states, that, "*In the times of Henry, Edward, Mary,*

case of your Lordship, so I, therefore, needed not,—ought not, perhaps, to have made them. Wherefore, to resume:—

"You are anxious," you say, "to know the true faith, and to settle your belief upon the solid grounds of Christian confidence, and security." Well, then, such being your happy disposition,—the question, which I here propose to your serious consideration, is this,—whether you really can acquire that knowledge of the truth, and attain that security, which you long for, by following your own fundamental principles? What these principles are, I have stated already. They are "the alleged prerogatives of Christian liberty,—the right of private judgment;" and "*the unalienable privilege*," as Bishop Tomline calls it, "*of every Christian to form his own religious opinions.*" These, indeed, are the very essence, and soul, of Protestantism; the real grounds of the Reformation, and the only alleged justification of that great apostacy. Their observance by every Protestant is so necessary, that, whoever has not adopted, and followed them, in the formation of his belief, is—although a Protestant,—an inconsistent one. However, before I exhort your Lordship to apply these principles to your own case, I will advise you first to consider well their character, and bearings. For, if they are *false*, they, then, in this case, can neither impart the knowledge, nor give you the security which you are seeking. They even *prove*,—since the Reformation is founded upon them,—that Protestantism itself is no other than a baseless fabric.

It is, then, the *duty* of every Protestant, or, as Dr. Tomline says, "*his unalienable privilege to form his own religious opinions.*" Now, my Lord, think you that such a privilege as this is really wise, or yet rational? For, taking the great herd of society together,—the ignorant, the weak, the vicious, and so on, (for all these, by your charter of the Reformation, are con-

and Elizabeth, the greater proportion of the nobility, and gentry, appear to have preferred the Catholic religion." (Const. Hist.)

There is another remark of the same learned and candid historian, which is also applicable to the present subject. He asserts, that, "*The whole class of our Antiquaries,*"—the persons, who, beyond all other Protestants, are the best acquainted with our religion,—"*scarce keep on the mask of Protestantism.*" The fact is, the very stones of our antiquities, and our venerable monuments, *speak*, and eloquently preach the divine character of our religion.

stituted the judges, and the arbiters, of their own belief) can you believe, that such individuals are either suited to form, or capable of forming, for themselves a safe code of religious opinions? You cannot, I am sure, believe so palpable an absurdity,—an absurdity still greater than it would be to ordain, that every man should be his own lawyer, or his own physician;—an absurdity just equally great, and alike cruel, as it would be to place a set of raw, inexperienced landsmen, in an ill-built, crazy vessel, and bid them sail, without anchor, helm, and compass, to India, or the Pole;—no pilot to guide them but their own ideas; no star to direct them but the visions of their own fancies, and imaginations. The fact is, that even in the most ordinary subjects of literature, there are few,—very few,—amongst the vulgar, or in the general paths of society, who are capable of judging of them, with any thing like wisdom. Hence, then, to constitute all such beings,—as your Charter does,—the arbiters of their own belief, and the judges of the deep, difficult, and mysterious doctrines of religion,—this, to say the least of it, is grossly unreasonable. Whence, also, I here infer, that the very first rule of Protestantism is *false;* and not only false, but, moreover, (since it must generate confusion,) irreligious and profane,—fatal to truth, and ruinous to piety.

> In fabricâ, si falsa est regula prima,
> Omnia mendosè fieri, atque obstipa, necessum est:
> Prava, cubantia, prona, atque obsona tecta. LUCRET.

This is not an inaccurate description of the fabric of Protestantism.

It is true, that, in the foregoing reflections, I have alluded principally to the vulgar, and to the less educated orders of public life,—to the great mass of society. Well, then, to refer now to the more favoured portions of its members, and to the well-instructed,—to individuals, even the most eminent for their talents, and the most distinguished for their learning,—think you, my Lord, I will again ask, that even these are competent to the task of framing for themselves, by the observance of your rule of faith, a secure code of Christian doctrines? If you consider the subject candidly, you will not, I am persuaded, be induced to believe this. For, what is the fact, even in regard of these individuals? They, not less than the ignorant,

and the uneducated, have, of course, their passions, and their weaknesses, their prejudices, partialities, &c. And these, giving a bias to the mind, and darkening the beams of truth, render hence the acquirement of exact knowledge extremely difficult even to them. And, is it not, moreover, the case in relation to these men, that they too—not less than the vulgar and the illiterate,—possess very different degrees of talents, and very various forms of tastes, notions, and ideas? They see objects, still more than the ignorant, in a far greater multitude of shapes, attitudes, bearings, and relations. Whence, also, it is the fact, that there is no set of men, who differ so much amongst themselves, or who, by following your rule of faith, have fallen into so many errors, and broached so many false doctrines, as they have done. Why, only make, for a moment, the following supposition:—Let any given number of your most learned Protestant friends,—men, too, distinguished for their abilities, and respected for their piety, candour, and good sense,—let these,—the Bible in their hands, and their commentators, if you will, before them,—sit down seriously to form, each one for himself,—according to your leading rule,—a code of religious opinions. What, even in this case, (for this is genuine Protestantism) would be the result? Would their respective codes, or opinions, agree together? No, not so much as any two of them, although it were merely for this plain reason, that no two minds, nor any two men, are alike. Their respective codes, or opinions, would, therefore, differ. *Therefore*, I again infer, that the very first, and most essential, rule of your religion is alike false, and groundless; whether it be considered as relating to the learned, or regarding the unlearned and the ignorant. For the rule which does not generate truth, unity, and concord, can neither be the dictate of the Divine wisdom, nor be the foundation of wise security.*

* The Charter of the Reformation has always been the theme of the loud, and unceasing, praises of the Protestant writers. It immortalises, they triumphantly contend, its authors; emancipates men from the yoke of spiritual tyranny; and restores them to the rights, and privileges, of Christianity, of liberty, and reason. Such, and far more than these, are the eulogies, which we read, and hear, every day, of this "glorious, and sacred," instrument. But is it, then, true, that it does really deserve these

If your Lordship admit the truth of the foregoing observations, you must then feel, how unsafe, and imprudent, it is for

exalted praises? Why, if it be right to judge of causes by their effects, or of principles by their consequences, it, in these cases, most certainly, *does not*. Judging of it *thus*, it is impossible for wisdom not to see, or for candour not to own, that so far from deserving the boasted praises, it is, on the contrary, the very source of confusion, error, and impiety. Never, indeed, did the spirit of irreligion invent any thing more fatal than it is to the unity of truth: nor has the genius of independence ever forged aught, that is more injurious to the harmony of social order. *In regard of religion,* it is the basis, and the *sanction*, too, of all those false, foolish, and conflicting, creeds, and opinions, which, every where,—in every Protestant country,—disgrace the wisdom, or defile the sanctity, of Christianity. All these are alike its offspring; and alike founded upon its principles. It is so, too, with respect to all those dreadful, and profane, systems of infidelity, impiety, and philosophism, which have so deeply undermined, and are labouring so assiduously to destroy, both the fabric of faith, and all the safe-guards of piety, and morals. All these are just equally its creatures; and are, all, just equally grounded upon its maxims. It is, accordingly, solely by its alleged authority, that all the advocates of these monstrous codes,—the Socinian, the Deist, the very Atheist himself,—not only defend, but affect to prove, their respective doctrines. Their doctrines are, in fact, *just as consistently* founded upon it, as are those of any of the other sects, or religions, of the Reformation. And it is for this very reason, as I have stated before, that it has been, long since, foretold, that Protestantism must ere long terminate in complete Socinianism,—"*not*," as the French Encyclopedists remark, "*for the honour of that religion, but for the credit of its philosophy.*" "*Whatsoever*," says the impious Bayle, "*I either believe, or disbelieve, I believe, and disbelieve, on the principles of Protestantism.*"

In regard of the order of social life. It is here, also, the case,—nearly as it is in the order of religion,—that the chief cause of that restless spirit of insubordination, which is now, and has been long, so prevalent in Europe, are the principles of the Reformation. The effect is only natural. For, if men are instructed, and allowed to believe, and think, as they please, they will soon, also, *act*, as they please. Action is the immediate result of opinion, and thought. Whence, as for the most part,—seduced by some passion, or other,—men judge, and think amiss, so likewise they act amiss. Accordingly, referring to the epoch of the Reformation, we find, that, no sooner was its boasted Charter proclaimed, and adopted, than, straight, the spirit of independence, and the demon of anarchy, took possession of its admirers: and states, once the happiest, and most submissive, became the prey to sedition, bloodshed, and rebellion. The works, indeed, of the first Reformers,—independently of their great charter of liberty,—are replete with revolutionary, anti-social, and licen-

yourself,—or for any other individual,—to risk the prospects of salvation upon the sanctions of any creed, concocted by the dictates of private judgment, or founded upon the privileges of your "immortal" Charter. However, as I have said that I would apply those observations to your own case, I will now, for this end, suppose, that,—as a consistent Protestant,—*you* have, in compliance with your favourite rule, and under its direction, framed for yourself a set of religious opinions,—some kind of creed. I will suppose this, and still farther, that you have done so with the utmost sincerity, and according to the dictates of your very best judgment. All this is real Protestantism. Well then, let me, still, ask you:—Are you, after all, satisfied, and convinced? Are you sure, that your opinions are true? Are you sure, that the sense which you have put upon the texts of your Bible, and applied to its various passages, is their only right sense? You cannot, of course, be infallibly sure,—because you admit no infallibility. But are you *prudently* sure? No; not even so: because the sense, and interpretation, which your Lordship has put upon them, are different from the sense, and interpretation, which, you find, are put upon them by multitudes of individuals, who are at least equally learned, enlightened, and virtuous, as yourself. The real fact is, that the creed, which you have thus made out for yourself, most probably is,—or rather, certainly is,—(as every creed must be that is formed by the dictates of private judgment,) *a creed by itself;* that is, a creed differing from any, and every, other. For, as all private judgments differ, so also must the opinions, which they generate. Under these cir-

tious, maxims. "*The political writings of the Reformers,*" says Chalmers, "*were what we now reprobate as Jacobinical, being equally irreconcilable with the principles of established society, as inconsistent with the pure precepts of the Christian religion.*" It was, in fact, Luther, Beza, and the gang of their fellow-apostles, that first conjured up from the dark abyss those dreadful maxims of liberty, equality, and the rights of man, which have deluged nations and states in blood; and which, it is greatly to be feared, are now preparing fresh scenes of misery for mankind. It was after having calculated the bearings of the Reformed Charter, and foreseeing the evils which it was destined to produce, that Melancthon, in the gloomy forebodings of his penetrating mind, exclaimed:—"*Great God, what calamities have we not been preparing for posterity!*"

cumstances, therefore, you *cannot*,—if you reflect piously upon the subject,—you *cannot* feel, and enjoy, those calm, and unhesitating *convictions*, which are the best ingredients of Christian happiness, nor possess that *certitude*, which is the essential quality of Christian faith. If you possess,—as I trust you do,—any share of humility, you *must*, in this case, *doubt*. The belief, indeed, of every Protestant, who has formed his religious notions *consistently*,—according to the dictates of his own judgment,—is *not faith*, but *opinion;* not *certitude*, but *conjecture;* not enlightend *conviction*, but *sentiment*, *fancy*, or *fanaticism*. He says, indeed, "*My religion is the Bible.*" Vain pretext! For, what constitutes a man's religion, or his belief, is not the *dead* letter of his Bible, but his own *living* interpretation of it. In like manner, he calls the Bible his "*Rule of faith.*" Illusive idea, again! For he, in reality, makes his own judgment the rule of the Sacred Volume. And hence, and thus, it is, that the divine but insulted book is made the ground of every form of error, and the alleged proof of every species of absurdity. It is converted into a mantle, to conceal, and cover, every kind of disgusting ulcer.

XVI. I have, thus far, shown your Lordship two clear and important points; the first, that the belief of every Protestant, *in order to be consistent*, should be founded upon the dictates of his own private judgment; the second, that such foundation is neither the real basis of Christian *faith*, nor the solid grounds of Christian security. I have, however, spoken only of *consistent* Protestantism; of an order of belief, formed according to the leading principles of the Reformation. But so, my Lord, it is: consistency is not any where the prominent characteristic of Protestantism. So far is this from being the case, that nothing is more grossly violated by its Churches, nor less heeded by its members. In regard of the latter,—or of the Protestant public,—your Lordship cannot but know, how very few there are, any where, of those thinking, and reasoning individuals, who, by the process of serious study, and impartial investigation, have either composed their own religious creeds, or who have ever so much as considered the grounds of the religion which they profess. The case almost universally is, that born, and brought

up, in such and such a sect, they continue,—save when enticed away by the cant, and noise, of some artful fanatic; or else, charmed away by the eloquence of some favourite preacher,—they continue to live on unconcernedly in it, neither questioning its claims, doubting of its truth, nor yet knowing its real doctrines. It is so, my Lord, most commonly, in your own Established Church. For, how very few of its members are there, who have ever attentively studied the Thirty-nine Articles of its singular creed? And, what multitudes, again, who have never given themselves the trouble so much as to read them over? And what, therefore, is the consequence? Why, that, of course, all these live on, and believe, inconsistently; violating the very first rule, and law, of Protestantism. They live on, and believe, under the influence, and control, of the very rule, and law, which they *profess* to reject,—that is, under the guidance of *authority*,—thus observing in *practice*, what they reprobate in *principle*.

But, it is in your Churches themselves, as I have stated, and above all, in your powerful and richly endowed Churches, that these violations of consistency are the most flagrant, and notorious. Your Churches, as your Lordship knows, were, all of them, originally founded upon the *ruins* of authority, and upon the *rejection* of all spiritual dominion. Their authors, —your apostles of the Reformation, — indignantly rising up against these, and asserting the alleged rights of Christian liberty, proclaimed loudly, and every where, to the public, that any assumption of *authority* in matters of faith,—any control of opinion in the doctrines of religion,—are acts of usurpation, and injustice; the infringements, both of the privileges of the Gospel, and of the prerogatives of human reason;—in short, acts of downright tyranny. Such as these were the principles, and such the language, of the first founders of your Churches. And it was, accordingly, upon the ground of these principles, that they succeeded, early, in attracting followers; and in forming, ere long, those institutions, which, unhappily for the cause of Christian unity, and truth, now divide, and disgrace, the pure religion of Jesus Christ.*

* There is no Reformed Church, in which the inconsistency of *conduct* with *principle* is more glaring, than it is in the Church of England. This

But, mark now, my Lord, the conduct of these same enemies of authority, and of these heroes of Christian liberty. No sooner had they contrived, by the exertions of their violence, and the artifices of their cunning, to obtain power, and to secure to themselves a commanding influence over the minds of their deluded followers, than straight they began to organise them into Churches; composed for them creeds; imposed upon them tests, and confessions of faith; issued out canons, the most restrictive, and laws, the most arbitrary and repulsive. They, in short, arrogated to themselves all those same rights, and prerogatives, which, until now, they had reprobated so severely, in the Church, which they had just abandoned. Such was the conduct of all the first founders of the Protestant Churches; insomuch, that many of the most ardent, but more consistent, defenders of the Reformation,—deploring the contradictions, and incoherency, of those men,—declared loudly, that they exercised a degree of authority more arbitrary, and tyrannical, than any thing which had been endured under the dominion of the Church of Rome.

Men may reason as they will: they may reject authority,

Church,—as all the various Protestant Churches are reduced to do,—admits, and its writers even loudly extol, the rights of private judgment, and the privilege of every Christian to form his own religious opinions. And yet, what,—notwithstanding these fine professions,—is the conduct of this Church? Why,—mark the contradiction:—It not only condemns, but cruelly excommunicates, all those who do so,—that is, all those, who, judging for themselves, form their own religious opinions,—*unless their opinions accord exactly with its own.* Thus, in its leading canons, it solemnly proclaims, that "All dissenters; all deniers of the King's supremacy; all impugners of the Church of England, and of episcopal ordinations; all separatists from its communion: all authors of sects,"—it solemnly proclaims, and declares all these, "*Ipso facto excommunicated:*" which, in fact, is thus equally declaring them,—according to *its* principles of excommunication,—in a state of reprobation! In short, the Church of England claims to itself a measure, and share of authority, which are at least equal to any thing that is assumed by the Church of Rome. It thunders out anathemas; pronounces censures; imposes tests; exacts oaths, &c. Surely, if all this is not a mockery of the boasted liberty of Protestantism, and of its "glorious" Charter,—if it is not a derision of all consistency,—I then leave it to wisdom, superior to mine, to say what is so.

when it suits their purposes; and, like the first reformers, treat it as an act of tyranny, and usurpation. But, let their purposes be once attained,—let these enemies of authority have once, themselves, acquired authority,—behold, soon forgetting their former conduct, and declarations,—and spite of all the inconsistency of the thing,—they *now* arrogate to themselves those very prerogatives, and exert all that same control, which, lately, they had condemned with so much violence. Such, precisely, was the conduct of the apostles of the Reformation. They first pulled down authority; and then, upon its *ruins*, they built up their own. In fact, this is the history of all successful rebellions. Men rebel, in order to obtain power; and having done this, they then recall those very ties, and re-establish those very fetters, against which they had, themselves, revolted. And as, too, it is in the order of religion, above all, that the control of authority is peculiarly requisite,—since, without it, all soon becomes confusion, and disorder,—so the Reformers, aware of this,—but anxious chiefly to preserve their newly acquired power, —boldly took away that liberty, which they had extolled so ardently; and called back those restraints, which, lately, they had spurned with so much indignation. Such are the grounds of the authority of your Reformed Churches.

It is your wish to know the truth, and to be secure. Well, then, the question which I now propose to your Lordship to consider, is this:—you have seen that men cannot attain any positive assurance of the truth of their religious opinions,—nor, therefore, any real security,—by following the dictates of their own *private judgment*. You have seen this; and that your reformers, and your reformed Churches,—violating this great principle of genuine Protestantism,—appeal from it to the principle of *authority*,—regulating by *its* mandates, and by the assumed sanctions of *its* name,—the belief, and professions, of their respective subjects. Wherefore,—having seen this,—the points, which I here invite you to examine, are these: in the first place, to ascertain the fact, whether your Churches,—or any of your Churches,—do really possess that *authority*, which they thus assume, and exercise: in the next place, to endeavour seriously to find out, what Church it is, that presents the best, and clearest, claims to this divine prerogative. Such are the

points, which, in your prudence, you should study to ascertain; and which, once ascertained, will prepare for you that security, which you are seeking to attain. "*For, in whatsoever Church, —in the hands of whatsoever pastors,—that* AUTHORITY *is now vested, which Christ once confided to his Apostles,—that Church* ALONE *is the true Christian sanctuary; those pastors* ONLY *are the true shepherds of the faithful.*"

It was, accordingly, by this very argument, in preference to any other, that, in the early ages of the Church, its enlightened ministers, and the holy fathers, were wont to repel, and refute, the alleged claims of the pretended reformers, who, in those days, rose up, sometimes, to corrupt the faith, and to disturb the union, of the faithful. "*Who,*" they called out to the daring innovators, "*who are* YOU? *Who sent* YOU? *From what cloud have you fallen? From what sea have you emerged? Who gave you the authority to administer the sacraments, or to preach the Word? Show your credentials. Produce your title-deeds.*" Such as these were the questions, which those wise, and holy men, used invariably to put to the reformers of their times. Do you, therefore, my Lord, employ, and put, the same to *your* reformers, and to the founders, and pastors, of *your* Churches. The same, or the like questions, applied to these men, will instruct, and enlighten you, respecting the nature of their claims; and will serve you, as a clue, that will conduct you to the vestibule of that temple, which is "the pillar and the ground of truth." In fact, the above questions, seriously asked, and candidly answered, are, of themselves, amply sufficient to decide the whole controversy, which separates your Protestant Churches from their parent institute:—since nothing, I repeat it,—is, in religion, more certain, than that whatsoever Church, and pastors, possess that *commission,* given once to the Apostles,—and which is the sole source of all legitimate spiritual power,—*that Church* ALONE is the true "Fold" of Christ; *those pastors* ONLY are its true ministers.

Your Lordship is, of course, aware,—for, it is the doctrine of your own establishment,—that the commission, or diploma, of the Apostles, authorising them to govern the Church, was designed to be *perpetual,* and in a direct line of inheritance

to descend to their lawful successors, till the end of time; still authorising these to perform the same sacred functions. "*For, if,*" says your powerful reasoner, Law,—"*if there be not a succession of men, authorised by Christ, to send others to act in His name, then both Episcopal, and Presbyterian teachers, are equally usurpers; and as mere lay men as any at all. For, there cannot be any other difference between clergy, and laity, but as one has authority from Christ, to perform offices, which the other has not. But, that authority can be no otherwise had than by an uninterrupted succession of men from Christ, empowered to qualify others. For, if the succession be once broken, people must either go into the ministry, of their own account, or be sent by such as have no more power to send others, than to go themselves. And can these be called the ministers of Christ, or be received as his ambassadors?*" These sentiments of Law are both the dictate of good sense, and of sound theology. For, as St. Paul says,—speaking of the pastoral functions,—"*No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was.*" Not even does the Apostle permit any individual so much as to *preach*,—which is the least awful duty of the sacred ministry,—without a divine commission. "*How*," he adds, "*shall men* PREACH, *unless they are sent?*"

Wherefore, since it is thus manifest, that the authority of Churches,—or of the pastoral ministry,—is essentially founded upon the *commission*, given originally to the Apostles, and still preserved in the hands of their successors; so, what alone your Lordship here needs to do,—and the task is an easy one,—is simply to examine, and verify the *fact*, where,—in what Church, or in the hands of what pastors,—this divine credential is now vested; whether in any Protestant Church, or in ours; whether in the hands of your pastors, or of ours. Your prudence will judge, and your candour decide, to which of these the sacred diploma appears the most clearly to belong.

In the first place, then, with regard to your Protestant Churches, and their pastors, the following is a fact, which your Lordship will not contest:—that so lately as at the opening of the sixteenth century, there existed nowhere,—in no kingdom, nor corner of the universe,—any Protestant Church at all, nor, consequently, any Protestant pastors. Every thing here,

and in all the enlightened parts of the Christian world, was, at that time, *Catholic*. So that thus, *this point* at least is certain, —that the origin of your Churches is a recent occurrence,—a circumstance this, which, in religion, is an awkward, and awful thing. "*For*," says your learned Bishop Pearson, "*whatever in religion is* NEW, *is* NONE." The first author of the innovation, I need not say it, was Luther. He stood, as himself informs us, for some time, "*all alone*,"—"*primo, solus eram*." As, however, the spirit of novelty, and innovation, is contagious, and there are, every where, restless, and disordered minds,—so, ere long, he was joined by a set of discontented priests, and licentious friars. Wherefore, assisted by these, and urged on by the impetuosity of his own passions, he soon (for "a down-hill Reformation rolls apace") he soon united to himself a very formidable body of adherents; and thus supported, and emboldened,—spurning now the authority, which he had hitherto obeyed,—he abandoned his parent Church, and set up a new order of religion. His example (such was the character of his principles, and such the effect of rebellion) was early followed by a host of other reformers, who, also, attracting admirers, and having different views of religion from the arch-apostle, as well as various motives, organised new creeds, and established Churches of their own. Speaking of all these men, and of himself, Calvin says of them:—"*We separated ourselves from the communion of the whole world.*" Such were the causes; such the date, and origin, of your Protestant Churches, and of their pastoral ministries.

Wherefore, my Lord, put now to your Reformers, and to their successors,—put to your clergy, any where,—those same questions, which I have just been citing from the fathers, and from the early pastors of the Church. Ask these men:—"*Who are* YOU? *Who sent* YOU? *Who gave* YOU *the authority to administer the sacraments, and to preach the Word? Show your credentials. Produce your title-deeds.*" Ask but these, and such like questions. The effect will be, that, confused, and perplexed, you will find no answer that will satisfy you; no argument, that will convince your reason. Thus, when you ask them:—"*Who sent* YOU?" You are lost at once, for want of a reply. You look round you in vain for any thing that resem-

bles, or approaches, to a regular delegation, inherited, in the order of succession, from the Apostles. How then, or whence, can they have derived their presumed authority? Not from any new diploma, or fresh revelation. They do not even allege such privilege. Not from the pastors of any sects, that were similar to their own. There were none such: neither do they lay claim to such line of ancestry. Not from the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church, so far from granting them any authority, on the contrary, took away from them all the authority, which they had hitherto possessed; and declaring them rebels, pronounced upon them the sentence of excommunication. The pretext, indeed, of deriving any authority from the Catholic Church, (although it has been, and is still, frequently made use of by the writers of the Established Church) is so utterly groundless, and inconsistent, that it was treated by your first Reformers,—by Cranmer, Barlow, and their fellow bishops,—as an absurdity. And those men, accordingly, professed to hold their authority, like so many magistrates, from the *Prince*. In fact, what can well be more absurd than for any body of men to pretend to derive their mission, or to hold their authority, from a Church, which had cut them off from her communion, and declared them rebels? Or what more inconsistent, than for such men to affect to claim any mission from a Church, which themselves had pronounced to be the very Church of Anti-Christ, and the sink of idolatry, superstition, &c.? Such Church could possess no mission; nor, therefore, impart any. So that thus, putting to the founders of your Churches, and to their successors, the questions, which I have recommended,—asking them, whence they have derived their assumed authority,—your Lordship will at once be reduced to feel, how very slender are their claims to any pastoral power, that can prudently be deemed divine. In fact, analysing candidly the grounds of their alleged commission, you will find, that these were little else than violence, artifice, insult, and injustice. These,—and the best evidences of history attest the fact,—are the real title-deeds of your Reformers, and their Churches.*

* The King of Prussia (Frederic) in one of his letters, describing the causes of the Reformation, says:—"*If you reduce the causes of the Reformation to their real, and simple, principles, you will find, that in Germany, it*

After you have thus considered the claims of your Reformed Churches to that sacred commission, which is the foundation of all pastoral authority,—proceed now to examine those of the Catholic Church. Examine seriously, whether the important diploma does not still remain invested in the hands of our Catholic ministry. If such be the fact, the great question is then decided between your Churches, and ours; since, whatsoever Church possesses the sacred instrument, *that* alone is the true Church of Christ, and the sole seat of wise security. "*Either this commission,*" says Dr. Daubeny, "*thus regularly handed down to us, is still in force, or not.* IF IT BE, *then all authority in the Church must continue to be derived from it.*

was the work of INTEREST; *in England, the effect of* LUST; *in France, the fruit of the love of* NOVELTY." "*These assertions,*" says the learned Starke, although a Protestant minister, "*are exactly conformable to the testimony of history.*"

The following description of the formation, and establishment, of the Church of England, is given in one of the late numbers of the Edinburgh Review. It is founded upon the clearest historical evidence; and is a fair specimen of the men, means, motives, and plans, to which nearly all the Reformed Churches owe their origin, and their triumphs. "*The founders of the Church of England were, a king, whose character may be best described, by saying, that he was despotism itself personified; unprincipled ministers; a rapacious aristocracy; a servile parliament. The work, which had been begun by Henry, the murderer of his wives, was continued by Somerset, the murderer of his brother; and completed by Elizabeth, the murderer of her guest. Sprung from brutal passion, the Reformation here was nurtured by selfish policy. Its principal founders were mere politicians. In regard of Cranmer, when an attempt is made to set him up as a saint, it is scarcely possible for any man of sense, who knows the history of the times well, to preserve his gravity. He was a supple, timid, interested courtier; and the ready tool of any, who could frighten him. It is not difficult to see, from what motives, and on what plan, such persons would be inclined to re-model the Church. The plan was, merely to rob the Babylonian enchantress of her ornaments, in order to transfer the full cup of her sorceries to other hands, —spilling as little as possible in the way.*" Such, as described by a body of learned, and candid Protestants, is the history of the establishment of the Church of England; such the persons who reared the imposing fabric; such the plans, the means, and motives, to which it owes its construction. With some shades of difference, they are similar to the instruments, the causes, and the schemes, to which all the first Churches of the Reformation owe their erection likewise. Order, piety, and moderation, had no where any part in their formation.

IF IT BE DETERMINED, THEN THE CHURCH, AND ITS MINISTRY, ARE DETERMINED WITH IT." This is real theology. Accordingly, my Lord, endeavour carefully to ascertain the vitally important fact. Now, happily for the cause of truth, and for the facilities of salvation, it is a point, which it is neither difficult to investigate, nor perplexing to determine. The records of profane history are, alone, sufficient to clear it up. These every where attest, that, at the era of the Reformation, the divine Charter did *then* certainly remain invested in the hands of the Catholic ministry,—as, indeed, if it had not remained there, it must, contrary to the positive assurances of its Divine author, have perished. But, the reality of its continuance there, at the above epoch, is a fact, which is admitted by your own Established Church; and not only, indeed, admitted, but, still farther, strenuously defended: because it is only thus, that its clergy affect, or can pretend, to link themselves to the apostolic and golden chain of ages. "*When the Reformation took place in England*," says Bishop Tomline, "*the bishops, and clergy, were not consecrated, and ordained again. They had received consecration, and ordination, from men, who had public authority given them in the congregation for that purpose; and to whom the power of consecrating, and ordaining, had been transmitted* FROM THE APOSTLES: AND THAT POWER WAS NOT VITIATED." Such as this is the almost universal language of your divines. Wherefore, my Lord, I here again appeal to your candour. It is thus conceded, that, at the epoch of the Reformation, the Divine authority, confided by our Saviour to his Apostles, remained still preserved in the hands of the Catholic ministry, and remained there even "*not vitiated.*" Now, such being the case, can you help feeling, that, therefore, it ought to remain,—*and must* remain,—there still? For, certain it is, that neither the Catholic ministry, nor the Catholic Church, have, either of them, since the above period, done any thing, that can even seem to have annulled, or forfeited, or yet weakened, the sacred trust. They have continued regularly to be, and are now, what they were at the era of the Reformation, and what they had always been before. So that, if, at that time, the authority of our pastoral ministry was,—as it is conceded,—apostolical, and divine, I then, in

this case, defy any ingenuity to prove, that it is not equally so, at present. And hence therefore again, if it be upon the grounds of *authority*, that men should build their faith; or if your Lordship consider *authority*, as the surest, and best, guide to the truth, you cannot well, in this case, entertain the slenderest doubt, where,—in what Church,—the sacred attribute exists. It exists clearly,—no evidence can be more palpable,—in the hands of the Catholic ministry. It was, accordingly, for this very reason, that the first Reformers, aware of the awkward circumstance, laid it down as the *first principle* of Protestantism to *reject* all authority in matters of faith, and to reprobate its assumption, as a violation of the rights and privileges of the Gospel. There is, indeed, nothing so completely *un*-protestant, as authority. Whosoever admits it in religion, *should* be,—and if he were consistent—*would* be, a Catholic.* But, so it is: consistency is not a Protestant virtue.

* Reasoning upon this subject, Rousseau has, with much consistency, said:—"*Let any man prove to me, that I ought to obey the dictates of* AUTHORITY,—*and to-morrow, I make myself a Catholic. And every consistent, and candid, man will do as I do. Qu'on me prouve, aujourd'hui, qu'en matière de foi, je suis obligé de me soumettre aux décisions de quelqu'un,—dès demain, je me fais Catholique. Et tout homme conséquent, et vrai, fera comme moi.*"

The following very sensible, and *Protestant*, reflections were made, but the other day, by the writer of one of the best periodicals:—"*The essence of Protestantism is, that it appeals from public authority to private conscience. It cannot, therefore, erect tribunals to prescribe a particular creed to that conscience. Its whole justification for its secession from the elder establishment, is the appeal to individual conscience against human authority. It is a* SUICIDAL *absurdity to attempt to appeal back to human authority from individual conscience. To set up one religion as true, and brand another as false, by law, is to set up a human jurisdiction above the Protestant Court of Conscience. No Christian sect can do this with consistency but the Roman Catholics. If Protestants persist, then, in doing it, they pave the way for what they profess most to dread,—*THE RETURN OF POPERY. *Let us not halt between two opinions. If we are Protestants, we renounce human authority in matters of conscience. If we are to bow the knee to authority, let us bow it to that, which can claim the best title by prescription. Let us return to the infallible Church. There is no medium.*"

"*If there must be an external rule of faith,*" says Blanco White,—lately one of the champions of the Church of England,—"*if there must be an external rule of faith besides the words of the Bible; if the mass of Christians*

XVI. It is difficult to engage men to renounce errors, which, from education, and habit, they have always cherished; or to embrace truths, however manifest, which from prejudice, and ignorance, they have constantly rejected. In these cases, the beams of light fall darkened upon the eye; and the accents of wisdom come weak, and unwelcome, to the ear. As then, notwithstanding your Lordship's candour, it may so chance, that, owing to some still lingering partialities, or early prejudices, the argument, which I have just employed, may not suffice to remove all your doubts respecting the divine character of our Church,—permit me, hence, to suggest to you, still farther, the few following considerations. I will merely *suggest* them, because my letter is too long already; and they are, moreover, considerations, which you may find detailed in some of my other writings.

There are, then, as your Lordship knows, certain *marks* of truth, peculiar to the Church of Christ, by which it may be known, and is distinguished, from all the conventicles of error. They are those, which are described in the Nicene Creed,—an instrument, which your Church declares "*is proved by the most certain warrants of Scripture,*" and which also it ordains, shall be always recited to you, on all the solemn occasions of your approaching to "The Communion." In this instructive document, you are taught to believe, that the true Church of Christ is "*One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolical.*" Such are its essential qualities, and characteristic features. Therefore, my Lord, adopt these as the criterions of your judgment; and consider seriously, whether they are indeed the distinguishing attributes of your Churches, or not. They must, of course, be such, if your Churches,—or if any one of them,—be really the true Christian sanctuary. So proceed, for example, thus:—

"*The true Church is* ONE." See, therefore, and consider, whether your Churches present any where this blessed *oneness?* Looking at the general state of Protestantism, you behold a scene of the most Babel-like confusion,—religions in

must submit to the decisions of another authority, by whatever name it may be called,—Pope, Council, Church, Reformers,—THE CHURCH OF ROME CAN FEAR NO RIVAL."

every shape of error; and so numberless, that no industry could so much as count them up. You seek for *unity* amongst them, in vain. In fact, the leading principle of them all is the very principle of *disunity*, and confusion,—the right of private judgment.

"*The True Church is* HOLY." And is *holiness*, then,—again consider,—a very prominent feature in your Churches? Referring to the history of your Reformation, you find, that their first *founders* were by no means saints; (Erasmus, who knew them well, says of them:—"*Give them but wine, and women,—their gospel supplies the rest,*") and that their *foundation* was the work of violence, and worldly policy. The PECULIAR *doctrines* of your Reformers, you will find, so far from being *holy*, were, for the most part, absolutely *unholy:* whilst in regard to the *discipline* of your Churches, you will own, that this,—very different from that of the saints,—is every where softened down to an order of practices, and duties, so very easy, and relaxed, that hardly can indolence, or sensuality itself, pretend, or presume, to murmur at their observance.

"*The True Church is Catholic.*" That is, it is the Church of *ages*, and of *nations;* and of ages, reaching down from the age of the Apostles; and of nations, diffused through all the regions of the globe. Such is the import of the attribute, "*Catholic.*" Therefore, consider what claim your Churches can, any of them, allege to this grand prerogative. Examining the chain of ages, you seek in vain for any Protestant Church, during the long length of fifteen hundred years. Examining the map of nations, you find, that each one of your numberless Churches is confined to a trifling boundary,—to the limits at most of a kingdom, or to the circle of a province. Aware of these defects, there is not so much as any one amongst them, that has ever presumed to arrogate to itself the honourable name of *Catholic*.

"*The True Church is Apostolical.*" You have already considered the claims of your Churches to this important prerogative: and you have remarked, how very slender, and defective, they appear. In fact, the recentness alone of their establishment is, itself, a sufficient proof, that they cannot well, nor consistently, be looked upon, as Apostolical.

When your Lordship has thus considered the nature of the aforesaid attributes, and observed how far they are applicable, or realised in your Protestant Churches,—changing now the scene, cast your eyes upon our Catholic Church; and examine, precisely in the same manner, how far they appear to you to be applicable, or verified, in it. If the divinity of the Church is really to be traced by the light of those evidences, you will feel little or no difficulty in coming to the determination, to what Church the sacred characteristics, the most obviously, belong. Thus, considering the subject of the true Church's *unity*,—you find in our religion the most perfect concord, and agreement,—its members, every where, believing the same doctrines, adoring the same mysteries, and obeying the same authority; fulfilling exactly that sentence of Tertullian :—"*Hoc sumus omnes, quod et singuli.*" Consulting the point of *holiness*,—you discover, at once, that *ours* is incontestably the Church of the *saints*; and that it was by the cultivation of its worship, and observances, that those happy beings were trained to the heroism of virtue, and perfection. Examining the attribute of *Catholicity*,—you clearly ascertain, even from the mere records of profane history, that ours is indeed the Church of ages, and of nations. Its empire you see flourishing, at every period since the days of the Apostles: its dominion you behold extended through every region of the globe, wherever civilisation reigned. Discussing the prerogative of *Apostolicity*,—you have already seen, that your own best theologians do not deny to our Church the honour of this grand essential.

Thus, then, my Lord, if,—as I have supposed, may be the case,—if the arguments, which I have employed to establish the divinity of our Church, from the fact of its possessing that divine *diploma*, which was once granted to the Apostles,—if those arguments have not sufficed to convince your reason, or to remove your doubts,—behold, in the adoption of the aforesaid criterions, a very simple, and easy, method of attaining the knowledge, which you are wishing to acquire. I do, indeed, think, that adopting those criterions, and applying them candidly to your Churches, and to ours,—you can, in this case, have little or no hesitation,—as I have just now said, in deciding, to which of these the sacred attributes best belong. In your

Churches, you cannot but observe, that the divine features are, either absolutely wanting, or else, miserably defective: whilst, in ours, you find them strikingly conspicuous, and complete. *Therefore*, my Lord, conviction for conviction, and security for security, can you help owning that the conviction and security of the Catholic are far more solid, and satisfactory, than the flattering, and ill-grounded, assurances of the Protestant? Surrounded by the best evidences of the truth, supported by the strongest attestations of authority, and reposing upon the Rock of Ages,—the Catholic, if well instructed, can experience neither perplexities, nor doubts. Possessing none of these consoling benefits,—having, *if he be consistent*, no better proof, that his belief is true, and his Church divine, than the dictates of his own private—and therefore feeble—judgment,—the Protestant, under these circumstances, *must*,—if piously thoughtful,—be *perplexed*;—must, like your Lordship at present, feel uneasy, and distressed. It is, in reality, upon these accounts,—that is, on account of the slender grounds, and unsatisfactory principles of Protestantism, which neither give any real certitude to belief, nor any wise assurance to the heart, that we have recently seen so many Protestants,—and amongst these, some of the most distinguished scholars in Europe,—the Schlegels, the Hallers, the Schellings, the Müllers, the Stolbergs, &c., abandoning the errors of Protestantism, and becoming Catholics,—the happy members now, and the ornaments, of that Church, of which they had been once the severest enemies.

It is an injury to the cause of charity and truth, that, cheated by the misrepresentations of a bigoted pulpit, and deceived by the lies, and insults, of an interested press, the public, *in this country*,—with very rare exceptions,—neither know, nor seek to know, aught, concerning the real religion of their Catholic forefathers. Hence, their prejudices, and hostility, against it. Their ignorance, and prejudices, are so much the more criminal and blameable, as every thing in their own principles should *compel* them; every thing in our religion should *engage* them, to study the great subject well. Even the very monuments, which every where surround them, and invite the eye,—their Churches, colleges, &c.—the ivied arches, and mutilated tombs, and

mausoleums of the dead,—all these (they are Catholic) call eloquently upon them,—for they have voices,—to undertake the important task. But, alas! in vain. Imposed upon, as I have just said, by every form of falsehood, and abuse, they are too deeply prejudiced to hear, or heed, the persuasive invitation. They shut their ears to the truth, and contemn a religion, in which alone there can exist faith without instability; conviction without perplexity; peace without uneasiness, and doubt.

I have said, however, that the above reproaches do not apply to your Lordship. *You*, more prudent, and enlightened,—emancipating yourself from the prejudices of an illiberal education,—have wisely, and with much consistency, undertaken to study our doctrines, and to ascertain the true character of our Church. The consequence has been such already, as might be expected from a mind so open, and sincere, as yours. Already you condemn, with me, the injustice of your own writers; and you even admit the truth of *some* of our doctrines. These are favourable omens,—the fair dawnings of brighter days. Only, my Lord, persevere. Continue the task, which you have thus so happily begun; careful, meanwhile,—*for faith is the gift of God*,—to call down by the fervour of your prayers, and the piety of your conduct, the light, and grace, of the Holy Ghost. Do this; and ere long, being thus assisted, you will find, that your few lingering perplexities will vanish; and from amidst the clouds of error, which have so long hung over you, you will be ushered into "the brightness of God's admirable light," into the delightful regions of security and peace.

In regard of that *great mystery*, which forms still the chief subject of your doubts, and hesitations,—let your piety begin to view this, not as you have done hitherto,—with the eyes of a philosopher, and through the dark mists of human reason,—but as a Christian, by the light of faith; and through the beams of revelation,—careful always to remember, that the very essence of the mysterious doctrines of Christianity is their *incomprehensibility*. They are even called in the Scripture, "*apparent folly; the scandal of earthly wisdom; the rock, against which the pride of man is split.*" The case is:—we are here, in this life, in a state of trial, and probation; and therefore, in a state

also of darkness, and humiliation. Humility, and obedience, are the chief duties, and the principal characteristics, of the real Christian: and it is in order to inculcate, and enforce these virtues, that the mysteries of religion are imposed upon us. Hence, then, my Lord, instead of proudly endeavouring to pry into the awful secrets, consult only, as I have suggested, the *testimony*, or the *fact*, of their revelation. This is all, that, as a Christian, you *should* do; and all even, that, as an imperfect human being, you *can* do, in order to ascertain the truth of any mysterious doctrine whatsoever. *Therefore*, in all your succeeding inquiries into the doctrines of our religion, adopt, and apply, this said Christian rule: and *above all*, adopt, and apply it in your inquiry, concerning the great mystery of our altars. Do this: and the result, I have little or no doubt, will be,—such is my reliance on your candour, and the power of grace,—that, soon, you will, with me, believe, and adore, the sacred institution; and moreover,—as the saints all did,—cherish it, as the dearest object of your piety; as the strongest support of your virtue; and as the best pledge of your future happiness.

Thus, then, my Lord, I have endeavoured, as well as my slender abilities, and feeble health, would allow me, to comply with your too flattering solicitations. I have replied to your objections respecting our doctrines of the Eucharist; and I have pointed out to you the path, which conducts to the sanctuary of the true Church. Happy shall I be, if, by my weak but earnest efforts, I have contributed to relieve your uneasiness;—too happy, if I have succeeded in reconciling you to the belief of that religion, which was once the comfort, and the glory, of your illustrious ancestors. With this ardent hope,

I have the honour to remain

Your Lordship's Humble, and Obedient, Servant,

JOHN FLETCHER.

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